Presented to
The Library
of the
University of Toronto
by
Professor W.S. Milner

AT THE

T
8951
12

THE RING AND THE BOOK.

BY

ROBERT BROWNING,
M.A.,
HONORARY FELLOW OF BALLIOL COLLEGE, OXFORD.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

263753
25.1.32

SECOND EDITION.

SMITH, ELDER AND CO., LONDON.
1872.

[THE RIGHT OF TRANSLATION IS RESERVED.]

FOR USE IN
LIBRARY ONLY

PR
4219
A1
1872
V.3

SEEN BY
PRESERVATION
SERVICES
DATE 3-7-85

THE RING AND THE BOOK

VII.

POMPILIA.

I AM just seventeen years and five months old,
And, if I lived one day more, three full weeks;
'T is writ so in the church's register,
Lorenzo in Lucina, all my names
At length, so many names for one poor child,
—Francesca Camilla Vittoria Angela
Pompilia Comparini,—laughable!
Also 't is writ that I was married there
Four years ago: and they will add, I hope,
When they insert my death, a word or two,—

Omitting all about the mode of death,—
This, in its place, this which one cares to know,
That I had been a mother of a son
Exactly two weeks. It will be through grace
O' the Curate, not through any claim I have;
Because the boy was born at, so baptized
Close to, the Villa, in the proper church:
A pretty church, I say no word against,
Yet stranger-like,—while this Lorenzo seems
My own particular place, I always say.
I used to wonder, when I stood scarce high
As the bed here, what the marble lion meant,
With half his body rushing from the wall,
Eating the figure of a prostrate man—
(To the right, it is, of entry by the door)
An ominous sign to one baptized like me,
Married, and to be buried there, I hope.
And they should add, to have my life complete,
He is a boy and Gaetan by name—
Gaetano, for a reason,—if the friar
Don Celestine will ask this grace for me
Of Curate Ottoboni: he it was

Baptized me: he remembers my whole life
As I do his grey hair.

All these few things
I know are true,—will you remember them?
Because time flies. The surgeon cared for me,
To count my wounds,—twenty-two dagger-wounds,
Five deadly, but I do not suffer much—
Or too much pain,—and am to die to-night.

Oh how good God is that my babe was born,
—Better than born, baptized and hid away
Before this happened, safe from being hurt!
That had been sin God could not well forgive:
He was too young to smile and save himself.
When they took, two days after he was born,
My babe away from me to be baptized
And hidden awhile, for fear his foe should find,—
The country-woman, used to nursing babes,
Said "Why take on so? where is the great loss?
" These next three weeks he will but sleep and feed,
" Only begin to smile at the month's end;

" He would not know you, if you kept him here,
" Sooner than that; so, spend three merry weeks
" Snug in the Villa, getting strong and stout,
" And then I bring him back to be your own,
" And both of you may steal to—we know where!"
The month—there wants of it two weeks this day!
Still, I half fancied when I heard the knock
At the Villa in the dusk, it might prove she—
Come to say "Since he smiles before the time,
" Why should I cheat you out of one good hour?
" Back I have brought him; speak to him and judge!"
Now I shall never see him; what is worse,
When he grows up and gets to be my age,
He will seem hardly more than a great boy;
And if he asks "What was my mother like?"
People may answer "Like girls of seventeen"—
And how can he but think of this and that,
Lucias, Marias, Sofias, who titter or blush
When he regards them as such boys may do?
Therefore I wish some one will please to say
I looked already old though I was young;
Do I not . . say, if you are by to speak . .

Look nearer twenty? No more like, at least,
Girls who look arch or redden when boys laugh,
Than the poor Virgin that I used to know
At our street-corner in a lonely niche,—
The babe, that sat upon her knees, broke off,—
Thin white glazed clay, you pitied her the more:
She, not the gay ones, always got my rose.
How happy those are who know how to write!
Such could write what their son should read in time,
Had they a whole day to live out like me.
Also my name is not a common name,
"Pompilia," and may help to keep apart
A little the thing I am from what girls are.
But then how far away, how hard to find
Will anything about me have become,
Even if the boy bethink himself and ask!
No father that he ever knew at all,
Nor ever had—no, never had, I say!
That is the truth,—nor any mother left,
Out of the little two weeks that she lived,
Fit for such memory as might assist:

As good too as no family, no name,
Not even poor old Pietro's name, nor hers,
Poor kind unwise Violante, since it seems
They must not be my parents any more.
That is why something put it in my head
To call the boy "Gaetano"—no old name
For sorrow's sake; I looked up to the sky
And took a new saint to begin anew.
One who has only been made saint—how long?
Twenty-five years: so, carefuller, perhaps,
To guard a namesake than those old saints grow,
Tired out by this time,—see my own five saints!

On second thoughts, I hope he will regard
The history of me as what someone dreamed,
And get to disbelieve it at the last:
Since to myself it dwindles fast to that,
Sheer dreaming and impossibility,—
Just in four days too! All the seventeen years,
Not once did a suspicion visit me
How very different a lot is mine
From any other woman's in the world.

The reason must be, 't was by step and step
It got to grow so terrible and strange.
These strange woes stole on tiptoe, as it were,
Into my neighbourhood and privacy,
Sat down where I sat, laid them where I lay ;
And I was found familiarised with fear,
When friends broke in, held up a torch and cried
" Why, you Pompilia in the cavern thus,
" How comes that arm of yours about a wolf?
" And the soft length,—lies in and out your feet
" And laps you round the knee,—a snake it is!"
And so on.

Well, and they are right enough,
By the torch they hold up now: for first, observe,
I never had a father,—no, nor yet
A mother: my own boy can say at least
" I had a mother whom I kept two weeks!"
Not I, who little used to doubt . . *I* doubt
Good Pietro, kind Violante, gave me birth?
They loved me always as I love my babe
(—Nearly so, that is—quite so could not be—)

Did for me all I meant to do for him,
Till one surprising day, three years ago,
They both declared, at Rome, before some judge
In some court where the people flocked to hear,
That really I had never been their child,
Was a mere castaway, the careless crime
Of an unknown man, the crime and care too much
Of a woman known too well,—little to these,
Therefore, of whom I was the flesh and blood:
What then to Pietro and Violante, both
No more my relatives than you or you?
Nothing to them! You know what they declared.

So with my husband,—just such a surprise,
Such a mistake, in that relationship!
Everyone says that husbands love their wives,
Guard them and guide them, give them happiness;
'T is duty, law, pleasure, religion: well,
You see how much of this comes true in mine!
People indeed would fain have somehow proved
He was no husband: but he did not hear,
Or would not wait, and so has killed us all.

Then there is . . only let me name one more !
There is the friend,—men will not ask about,
But tell untruths of, and give nicknames to,
And think my lover, most surprise of all !
Do only hear, it is the priest they mean,
Giuseppe Caponsacchi : a priest—love,
And love me ! Well, yet people think he did.
I am married, he has taken priestly vows,
They know that, and yet go on, say, the same,
" Yes, how he loves you ! " " That was love "—they say,
When anything is answered that they ask :
Or else " No wonder you love him "—they say
Then they shake heads, pity much, scarcely blame—
As if we neither of us lacked excuse,
And anyhow are punished to the full,
And downright love atones for everything !
Nay, I heard read out in the public court
Before the judge, in presence of my friends,
Letters 't was said the priest had sent to me,
And other letters sent him by myself,
We being lovers !

Listen what this is like ! 180
When I was a mere child, my mother . . that 's
Violante, you must let me call her so
Nor waste time, trying to unlearn the word, . . .
She brought a neighbour's child of my own age
To play with me of rainy afternoons; 185
And, since there hung a tapestry on the wall,
We two agreed to find each other out
Among the figures. " Tisbe, that is you,
" With half-moon on your hair-knot, spear in hand,
" Flying, but no wings, only the great scarf 190
" Blown to a bluish rainbow at your back :
" Call off your hound and leave the stag alone ! "
" —And there are you, Pompilia, such green leaves
" Flourishing out of your five finger-ends,
" And all the rest of you so brown and rough : 195
" Why is it you are turned a sort of tree ? "
You know the figures never were ourselves
Though we nicknamed them so. Thus, all my life,—
As well what was, as what, like this, was not,—
Looks old, fantastic and impossible : 200
I touch a fairy thing that fades and fades.

—Even to my babe! I thought, when he was born,
Something began for once that would not end,
Nor change into a laugh at me, but stay
For evermore, eternally quite mine.
Well, so he is,—but yet they bore him off,
The third day, lest my husband should lay traps
And catch him, and by means of him catch me.
Since they have saved him so, it was well done:
Yet thence comes such confusion of what was
With what will be,—that late seems long ago,
And, what years should bring round, already come,
Till even he withdraws into a dream
As the rest do: I fancy him grown great,
Strong, stern, a tall young man who tutors me,
Frowns with the others "Poor imprudent child!
"Why did you venture out of the safe street?
"Why go so far from help to that lone house?
"Why open at the whisper and the knock?"

Six days ago when it was New Year's-day,
We bent above the fire and talked of him,
What he should do when he was grown and great.

Violante, Pietro, each had given the arm
I leant on, to walk by, from couch to chair
And fireside,—laughed, as I lay safe at last,
" Pompilia's march from bed to board is made,
" Pompilia back again and with a babe,
" Shall one day lend his arm and help her walk ! "
Then we all wished each other more New Years.
Pietro began to scheme—" Our cause is gained ;
" The law is stronger than a wicked man :
" Let him henceforth go his way, leave us ours !
" We will avoid the city, tempt no more
" The greedy ones by feasting and parade,—
" Live at the other villa, we know where,
" Still farther off, and we can watch the babe
" Grow fast in the good air ; and wood is cheap
" And wine sincere outside the city gate.
" I still have two or three old friends will grope
" Their way along the mere half-mile of road,
" With staff and lantern on a moonless night
" When one needs talk : they 'll find me, never fear,
" And I 'll find them a flask of the old sort yet ! "
Violante said " You chatter like a crow :

" Pompilia tires o' the tattle, and shall to bed:
" Do not too much the first day,—somewhat more
" To-morrow, and, the next, begin the cape
" And hood and coat! I have spun wool enough."
Oh what a happy friendly eve was that!

And, next day, about noon, out Pietro went—
He was so happy and would talk so much,
Until Violante pushed and laughed him forth
Sight-seeing in the cold,—" So much to see
" I' the churches! Swathe your throat three times!"
she cried,
" And, above all, beware the slippery ways,
" And bring us all the news by supper-time!"
He came back late, laid by cloak, staff and hat,
Powdered so thick with snow it made us laugh,
Rolled a great log upon the ash o' the hearth,
And bade Violante treat us to a flask,
Because he had obeyed her faithfully,
Gone sight-see through the seven, and found no church
To his mind like San Giovanni—" There 's the fold,
" And all the sheep together, big as cats!

" And such a shepherd, half the size of life,
" Starts up and hears the angel "—when, at the door,
A tap: we started up: you know the rest.

Pietro at least had done no harm, I know;
Nor even Violante, so much harm as makes
Such revenge lawful. Certainly she erred—
Did wrong, how shall I dare say otherwise?—
In telling that first falsehood, buying me
From my poor faulty mother at a price,
To pass off upon Pietro as his child.
If one should take my babe, give him a name,
Say he was not Gaetano and my own,
But that some other woman made his mouth
And hands and feet,—how very false were that!
No good could come of that; and all harm did.
Yet if a stranger were to represent
" Needs must you either give your babe to me
" And let me call him mine for evermore,
" Or let your husband get him "—ah, my God,
That were a trial I refuse to face!

Well, just so here: it proved wrong but seemed right
To poor Violante—for there lay, she said,
My poor real dying mother in her rags,
Who put me from her with the life and all,
Poverty, pain, shame and disease at once,
To die the easier by what price I fetched—
Also (I hope) because I should be spared
Sorrow and sin,—why may not that have helped?
My father,—he was no one, any one,—
The worse, the likelier,—call him,—he who came,
Was wicked for his pleasure, went his way,
And left no trace to track by; there remained
Nothing but me, the unnecessary life,
To catch up or let fall,—and yet a thing
She could make happy, be made happy with,
This poor Violante,—who would frown thereat?

Well, God, you see! God plants us where we grow.
It is not that, because a bud is born
At a wild briar's end, full i' the wild beast's way,
We ought to pluck and put it out of reach
On the oak-tree top,—say, "There the bud belongs!"

She thought, moreover, real lies were—lies told
For harm's sake; whereas this had good at heart,
Good for my mother, good for me, and good
For Pietro who was meant to love a babe,
And needed one to make his life of use,
Receive his house and land when he should die.
Wrong, wrong and always wrong! how plainly wrong!
For see, this fault kept pricking, as faults do,
All the same at her heart,—this falsehood hatched,
She could not let it go nor keep it fast.
She told me so,—the first time I was found
Locked in her arms once more after the pain,
When the nuns let me leave them and go home,
And both of us cried all the cares away,—
This it was set her on to make amends,
This brought about the marriage—simply this!
Do let me speak for her you blame so much!
When Paul, my husband's brother, found me out,
Heard there was wealth for who should marry me,
So, came and made a speech to ask my hand
For Guido,—she, instead of piercing straight
Through the pretence to the ignoble truth,

Fancied she saw God's very finger point,
Designate just the time for planting me,
(The wild briar-slip she plucked to love and wear)
In soil where I could strike real root, and grow,
And get to be the thing I called myself:
For, wife and husband are one flesh, God says,
And I, whose parents seemed such and were none,
Should in a husband have a husband now,
Find nothing, this time, but was what it seemed,
—All truth and no confusion any more.
I know she meant all good to me, all pain
To herself,—since how could it be aught but pain,
To give me up, so, from her very breast,
The wilding flower-tree-branch that, all those years,
She had got used to feel for and find fixed?
She meant well: has it been so ill i' the main?
That is but fair to ask: one cannot judge
Of what has been the ill or well of life,
The day that one is dying,—sorrows change
Into not altogether sorrow-like;
I do see strangeness but scarce misery,
Now it is over, and no danger more.

My child is safe; there seems not so much pain.
It comes, most like, that I am just absolved,
Purged of the past, the foul in me, washed fair,—
One cannot both have and not have, you know,—
Being right now, I am happy and colour things.
Yes, everybody that leaves life sees all
Softened and bettered: so with other sights:
To me at least was never evening yet
But seemed far beautifuller than its day,
For past is past.

There was a fancy came,
When somewhere, in the journey with my friend,
We stepped into a hovel to get food;
And there began a yelp here, a bark there,—
Misunderstanding creatures that were wroth
And vexed themselves and us till we retired.
The hovel is life: no matter what dogs bit
Or cats scratched in the hovel I break from,
All outside is lone field, moon and such peace—
Flowing in, filling up as with a sea
Whereon comes Someone, walks fast on the white,

Jesus Christ's self, Don Celestine declares,
To meet me and calm all things back again.

Beside, up to my marriage, thirteen years
Were, each day, happy as the day was long:
This may have made the change too terrible.
I know that when Violante told me first
The cavalier,—she meant to bring next morn,
Whom I must also let take, kiss my hand,—
Would be at San Lorenzo the same eve
And marry me,—which over, we should go
Home both of us without him as before,
And, till she bade speak, I must hold my tongue,
Such being the correct way with girl-brides,
From whom one word would make a father blush,—
I know, I say, that when she told me this,
—Well, I no more saw sense in what she said
Than a lamb does in people clipping wool;
Only lay down and let myself be clipped.
And when next day the cavalier who came
(Tisbe had told me that the slim young man
With wings at head, and wings at feet, and sword

Threatening a monster, in our tapestry,
Would eat a girl else,—was a cavalier)
When he proved Guido Franceschini,—old
And nothing like so tall as I myself,
Hook-nosed and yellow in a bush of beard,
Much like a thing I saw on a boy's wrist,
He called an owl and used for catching birds,—
And when he took my hand and made a smile—
Why, the uncomfortableness of it all
Seemed hardly more important in the case
Than,—when one gives you, say, a coin to spend,—
Its newness or its oldness; if the piece
Weigh properly and buy you what you wish,
No matter whether you get grime or glare!
Men take the coin, return you grapes and figs.
Here, marriage was the coin, a dirty piece
Would purchase me the praise of those I loved:
About what else should I concern myself?

So, hardly knowing what a husband meant,
I supposed this or any man would serve,
No whit the worse for being so uncouth:

For I was ill once and a doctor came
With a great ugly hat, no plume thereto,
Black jerkin and black buckles and black sword,
And white sharp beard over the ruff in front,
And oh so lean, so sour-faced and austere !—
Who felt my pulse, made me put out my tongue,
Then oped a phial, dripped a drop or two
Of a black bitter something,—I was cured !
What mattered the fierce beard or the grim face ?
It was the physic beautified the man,
Master Malpichi,—never met his match
In Rome, they said,—so ugly all the same !

However, I was hurried through a storm,
Next dark eve of December's deadest day—
How it rained !—through our street and the Lion's-mouth
And the bit of Corso,—cloaked round, covered close,
I was like something strange or contraband,—
Into blank San Lorenzo, up the aisle,
My mother keeping hold of me so tight,
I fancied we were come to see a corpse
Before the altar which she pulled me toward.

There we found waiting an unpleasant priest
Who proved the brother, not our parish friend,
But one with mischief-making mouth and eye,
Paul, whom I know since to my cost. And then
I heard the heavy church-door lock out help
Behind us: for the customary warmth,
Two tapers shivered on the altar. "Quick—
"Lose no time!"—cried the priest. And straightway down
From . . what's behind the altar where he hid—
Hawk-nose and yellowness and bush and all,
Stepped Guido, caught my hand, and there was I
O' the chancel, and the priest had opened book,
Read here and there, made me say that and this,
And after, told me I was now a wife,
Honoured indeed, since Christ thus weds the Church,
And therefore turned he water into wine,
To show I should obey my spouse like Christ.
Then the two slipped aside and talked apart,
And I, silent and scared, got down again
And joined my mother who was weeping now.
Nobody seemed to mind us any more,

And both of us on tiptoe found our way
To the door which was unlocked by this, and wide.
When we were in the street, the rain had stopped,
All things looked better. At our own house-door,
Violante whispered "No one syllable
" To Pietro! Girl-brides never breathe a word!"
" —Well treated to a wetting, draggle-tails!"
Laughed Pietro as he opened—" Very near
" You made me brave the gutter's roaring sea
" To carry off from roost old dove and young,
" Trussed up in church, the cote, by me, the kite!
" What do these priests mean, praying folk to death
" On stormy afternoons, with Christmas close
" To wash our sins off nor require the rain?"
Violante gave my hand a timely squeeze,
Madonna saved me from immodest speech,
I kissed him and was quiet, being a bride.

When I saw nothing more, the next three weeks,
Of Guido—" Nor the Church sees Christ" thought I:
" Nothing is changed however, wine is wine
" And water only water in our house.

" Nor did I see that ugly doctor since
" The cure of the illness : just as I was cured,
" I am married,—neither scarecrow will return."

Three weeks, I chuckled—" How would Giulia stare,
" And Tecla smile and Tisbe laugh outright,
" Were it not impudent for brides to talk !"—
Until one morning, as I sat and sang
At the broidery-frame alone i' the chamber,—loud
Voices, two, three together, sobbings too,
And my name, " Guido," " Paolo," flung like stones
From each to the other ! In I ran to see.
There stood the very Guido and the priest
With sly face,—formal but nowise afraid,—
While Pietro seemed all red and angry, scarce
Able to stutter out his wrath in words ;
And this it was that made my mother sob,
As he reproached her—" You have murdered us,
" Me and yourself and this our child beside !"
Then Guido interposed " Murdered or not,
" Be it enough your child is now my wife !
" I claim and come to take her." Paul put in,

" Consider—kinsman, dare I term you so?—
" What is the good of your sagacity
" Except to counsel in a strait like this?
" I guarantee the parties man and wife
" Whether you like or loathe it, bless or ban.
" May spilt milk be put back within the bowl—
" The done thing, undone? You, it is, we look
" For counsel to, you fitliest will advise!
" Since milk, though spilt and spoilt, does marble good,
" Better we down on knees and scrub the floor,
" Than sigh, 'the waste would make a syllabub!'
" Help us so turn disaster to account,
" So predispose the groom, he needs shall grace
" The bride with favour from the very first,
" Not begin marriage an embittered man!"
He smiled,—the game so wholly in his hands!
While fast and faster sobbed Violante—"Ay,
" All of us murdered, past averting now!
" O my sin, O my secret!" and such like.

Then I began to half surmise the truth;
Something had happened, low, mean, underhand,

False, and my mother was to blame, and I
To pity, whom all spoke of, none addressed:
I was the chattel that had caused a crime.
I stood mute,—those who tangled must untie
The embroilment. Pietro cried "Withdraw, my child!
" She is not helpful to the sacrifice
" At this stage,—do you want the victim by
" While you discuss the value of her blood?
" For her sake, I consent to hear you talk:
" Go, child, and pray God help the innocent!"

I did go and was praying God, when came
Violante, with eyes swollen and red enough,
But movement on her mouth for make-believe
Matters were somehow getting right again.
She bade me sit down by her side and hear.
" You are too young and cannot understand,
" Nor did your father understand at first.
" I wished to benefit all three of us,
" And when he failed to take my meaning,—why,
" I tried to have my way at unaware—
" Obtained him the advantage he refused.

" As if I put before him wholesome food
" Instead of broken victual,—he finds change
" I' the viands, never cares to reason why,
" But falls to blaming me, would fling the plate
" From window, scandalize the neighbourhood,
" Even while he smacks his lips,—men's way, my child!
" But either you have prayed him unperverse
" Or I have talked him back into his wits:
" And Paolo was a help in time of need,—
" Guido, not much—my child, the way of men!
" A priest is more a woman than a man,
" And Paul did wonders to persuade. In short,
" Yes, he was wrong, your father sees and says;
" My scheme was worth attempting: and bears fruit,
" Gives you a husband and a noble name,
" A palace and no end of pleasant things.
" What do you care about a handsome youth?
" They are so volatile, and teaze their wives!
" This is the kind of man to keep the house.
" We lose no daughter,—gain a son, that's all:
" For 't is arranged we never separate,
" Nor miss, in our grey time of life, the tints

" Of you that colour eve to match with morn.
" In good or ill, we share and share alike,
" And cast our lots into a common lap,
" And all three die together as we lived!
" Only, at Arezzo,—that 's a Tuscan town,
" Not so large as this noisy Rome, no doubt,
" But older far and finer much, say folks,—
" In a great palace where you will be queen,
" Know the Archbishop and the Governor,
" And we see homage done you ere we die.
" Therefore, be good and pardon!"—" Pardon what?
" You know things, I am very ignorant:
" All is right if you only will not cry!"

And so an end! Because a blank begins
From when, at the word, she kissed me hard and hot,
And took me back to where my father leaned
Opposite Guido—who stood eyeing him,
As eyes the butcher the cast panting ox
That feels his fate is come, nor struggles more,—
While Paul looked archly on, pricked brow at whiles
With the pen-point as to punish triumph there,—

And said " Count Guido, take your lawful wife
" Until death part you !"

All since is one blank,
Over and ended ; a terrific dream.
It is the good of dreams—so soon they go !
Wake in a horror of heart-beats, you may—
Cry, " The dread thing will never from my thoughts !"
Still, a few daylight doses of plain life,
Cock-crow and sparrow-chirp, or bleat and bell
Of goats that trot by, tinkling, to be milked ;
And when you rub your eyes awake and wide,
Where is the harm o' the horror ? Gone ! So here.
I know I wake,—but from what ? Blank, I say !
This is the note of evil : for good lasts.
Even when Don Celestine bade " Search and find !
" For your soul's sake, remember what is past,
" The better to forgive it,"—all in vain !
What was fast getting indistinct before,
Vanished outright. By special grace perhaps,
Between that first calm and this last, four years
Vanish,—one quarter of my life, you know.

I am held up, amid the nothingness,
By one or two truths only—thence I hang,
And there I live,—the rest is death or dream,
All but those points of my support. I think
Of what I saw at Rome once in the Square
O' the Spaniards, opposite the Spanish House:
There was a foreigner had trained a goat,
A shuddering white woman of a beast,
To climb up, stand straight on a pile of sticks
Put close, which gave the creature room enough:
When she was settled there he, one by one,
Took away all the sticks, left just the four
Whereon the little hoofs did really rest,
There she kept firm, all underneath was air.
So, what I hold by, are my prayer to God,
My hope, that came in answer to the prayer,
Some hand would interpose and save me—hand
Which proved to be my friend's hand: and,—best bliss,—
That fancy which began so faint at first,
That thrill of dawn's suffusion through my dark,
Which I perceive was promise of my child,
The light his unborn face sent long before,—

God's way of breaking the good news to flesh.
That is all left now of those four bad years.
Don Celestine urged "But remember more!
"Other men's faults may help me find your own.
"I need the cruelty exposed, explained,
"Or how can I advise you to forgive?"
He thought I could not properly forgive
Unless I ceased forgetting,—which is true:
For, bringing back reluctantly to mind
My husband's treatment of me,—by a light
That 's later than my life-time, I review
And comprehend much and imagine more,
And have but little to forgive at last.
For now,—be fair and say,—is it not true
He was ill-used and cheated of his hope
To get enriched by marriage? Marriage gave
Me and no money, broke the compact so:
He had a right to ask me on those terms,
As Pietro and Violante to declare
They would not give me: so the bargain stood:
They broke it, and he felt himself aggrieved,
Became unkind with me to punish them.

They said 't was he began deception first,
Nor, in one point whereto he pledged himself,
Kept promise: what of that, suppose it were?
Echoes die off, scarcely reverberate
For ever,—why should ill keep echoing ill,
And never let our ears have done with noise?
Then my poor parents took the violent way
To thwart him,—he must needs retaliate,—wrong,
Wrong, and all wrong,—better say, all blind!
As I myself was, that is sure, who else
Had understood the mystery: for his wife
Was bound in some sort to help somehow there.
It seems as if I might have interposed,
Blunted the edge of their resentment so,
Since he vexed me because they first vexed him;
" I will entreat them to desist, submit,
" Give him the money and be poor in peace,—
" Certainly not go tell the world: perhaps
" He will grow quiet with his gains."

Yes, say
Something to this effect and you do well!

But then you have to see first: I was blind.
That is the fruit of all such wormy ways,
The indirect, the unapproved of God:
You cannot find their author's end and aim,
Not even to substitute your good for bad,
Your open for the irregular; you stand
Stupefied, profitless, as cow or sheep
That miss a man's mind; anger him just twice
By trial at repairing the first fault.
Thus, when he blamed me, "You are a coquette,
"A lure-owl posturing to attract birds,
"You look love-lures at theatre and church,
"In walk, at window!"—that, I knew, was false:
But why he charged me falsely, whither sought
To drive me by such charge,—how could I know?
So, unaware, I only made things worse.
I tried to soothe him by abjuring walk,
Window, church, theatre, for good and all,
As if he had been in earnest: that, you know,
Was nothing like the object of his charge.
Yes, when I got my maid to supplicate
The priest, whose name she read when she would read

Those feigned false letters I was forced to hear
Though I could read no word of,—he should cease
Writing,—nay, if he minded prayer of mine,
Cease from so much as even pass the street
Whereon our house looked,—in my ignorance
I was just thwarting Guido's true intent;
Which was, to bring about a wicked change
Of sport to earnest, tempt a thoughtless man
To write indeed, and pass the house, and more,
Till both of us were taken in a crime.
He ought not to have wished me thus act lies,
Simulate folly,—but,—wrong or right, the wish,—
I failed to apprehend its drift. How plain
It follows,—if I fell into such fault,
He also may have overreached the mark,
Made mistake, by perversity of brain,
I' the whole sad strange plot, the grotesque intrigue
To make me and my friend unself ourselves,
Be other man and woman than we were!
Think it out, you who have the time! for me,—
I cannot say less; more I will not say.
Leave it to God to cover and undo!

Only, my dulness should not prove too much!
—Not prove that in a certain other point
Wherein my husband blamed me,—and you blame,
If I interpret smiles and shakes of head,—
I was dull too. Oh, if I dared but speak!
Must I speak? I am blamed that I forwent
A way to make my hushand's favour come.
That is true: I was firm, withstood, refused . .
—Women as you are, how can I find the words?

I felt there was just one thing Guido claimed
I had no right to give nor he to take;
We being in estrangement, soul from soul:
Till, when I sought help, the Archbishop smiled,
Inquiring into privacies of life,
—Said I was blameable—(he stands for God)
Nowise entitled to exemption there.
Then I obeyed,—as surely had obeyed
Were the injunction "Since your husband bids,
"Swallow the burning coal he proffers you!"
But I did wrong, and he gave wrong advice
Though he were thrice Archbishop,—that, I know!—

Now I have got to die and see things clear.
Remember I was barely twelve years old—
A child at marriage: I was let alone
For weeks, I told you, lived my child-life still
Even at Arezzo, when I woke and found
First . . but I need not think of that again—
Over and ended! Try and take the sense
Of what I signify, if it must be so.
After the first, my husband, for hate's sake,
Said one eve, when the simpler cruelty
Seemed somewhat dull at edge and fit to bear,
" We have been man and wife six months almost:
" How long is this your comedy to last?
" Go this night to my chamber, not your own!"
At which word, I did rush—most true the charge—
And gain the Archbishop's house—he stands for God—
And fall upon my knees and clasp his feet,
Praying him hinder what my estranged soul
Refused to bear, though patient of the rest:
" Place me within a convent," I implored—
" Let me henceforward lead the virgin life
" You praise in Her you bid me imitate!"

What did he answer? "Folly of ignorance?
"Know, daughter, circumstances make or mar
"Virginity,—'t is virtue or 't is vice.
"That which was glory in the Mother of God
"Had been, for instance, damnable in Eve
"Created to be mother of mankind.
"Had Eve, in answer to her Maker's speech
"'Be fruitful, multiply, replenish earth'—
"Pouted 'But I choose rather to remain
"'Single'—why, she had spared herself forthwith
"Further probation by the apple and snake,
"Been pushed straight out of Paradise! For see—
"If motherhood be qualified impure,
"I catch you making God command Eve sin!
"—A blasphemy so like these Molinists',
"I must suspect you dip into their books."
Then he pursued "'T was in your covenant!"

No! There my husband never used deceit.
He never did by speech nor act imply
"Because of our souls' yearning that we meet
"And mix in soul through flesh, which yours and mine

" Wear and impress, and make their visible selves,
" —All which means, for the love of you and me,
" Let us become one flesh, being one soul!"
He only stipulated for the wealth;
Honest so far. But when he spoke as plain—
Dreadfully honest also—" Since our souls
" Stand each from each, a whole world's width between,
" Give me the fleshy vesture I can reach
" And rend and leave just fit for hell to burn!"—
Why, in God's name, for Guido's soul's own sake
Imperilled by polluting mine,—I say,
I did resist; would I had overcome!

My heart died out at the Archbishop's smile;
—It seemed so stale and worn a way o' the world,
As though 't were nature frowning—" Here is Spring,
" The sun shines as he shone at Adam's fall,
" The earth requires that warmth reach everywhere:
" What, must your patch of snow be saved forsooth
" Because you rather fancy snow than flowers?"
Something in this style he began with me.
Last he said, savagely for a good man,

" This explains why you call your husband harsh,
" Harsh to you, harsh to whom you love. God's Bread!
" The poor Count has to manage a mere child
" Whose parents leave untaught the simplest things
" Their duty was and privilege to teach,—
" Goodwives' instruction, gossips' lore: they laugh
" And leave the Count the task,—or leave it me!"
Then I resolved to tell a frightful thing.
" I am not ignorant,—know what I say,
" Declaring this is sought for hate, not love.
" Sir, you may hear things like almighty God.
" I tell you that my housemate, yes—the priest
" My husband's brother, Canon Girolamo—
" Has taught me what depraved and misnamed love
" Means, and what outward signs denote the sin,
" For he solicits me and says he loves,
" The idle young priest with nought else to do.
" My husband sees this, knows this, and lets be.
" Is it your counsel I bear this beside?"
" —More scandal, and against a priest this time!
" What, 't is the Canon now?"—less snappishly—
" Rise up, my child, for such a child you are,

" The rod were too advanced a punishment!
" Let 's try the honeyed cake. A parable!
" ' Without a parable spake He not to them.'
" There was a ripe round long black toothsome fruit,
" Even a flower-fig, the prime boast of May:
" And, to the tree, said . . either the spirit o' the fig,
" Or, if we bring in men, the gardener,
" Archbishop of the orchard—had I time
" To try o' the two which fits in best: indeed
" It might be the Creator's self, but then
" The tree should bear an apple, I suppose,—
" Well, anyhow, one with authority said
" ' Ripe fig, burst skin, regale the fig-pecker—
" ' The bird whereof thou art a perquisite!'
" ' Nay,' with a flounce, replied the restif fig,
" ' I much prefer to keep my pulp myself:
" ' He may go breakfastless and dinnerless,
" ' Supperless of one crimson seed, for me!'
" So, back she flopped into her bunch of leaves.
" He flew off, left her,—did the natural lord,—
" And lo, three hundred thousand bees and wasps
" Found her out, feasted on her to the shuck:

" Such gain the fig's that gave its bird no bite!
" The moral,—fools elude their proper lot,
" Tempt other fools, get ruined all alike.
" Therefore go home, embrace your husband quick!
" Which if his Canon brother chance to see,
" He will the sooner back to book again."

So, home I did go; so, the worst befell:
So, I had proof the Archbishop was just man,
And hardly that, and certainly no more.
For, miserable consequence to me,
My husband's hatred waxed nor waned at all,
His brother's boldness grew effrontery soon,
And my last stay and comfort in myself
Was forced from me: henceforth I looked to God
Only, nor cared my desecrated soul
Should have fair walls, gay windows for the world.
God's glimmer, that came through the ruin-top,
Was witness why all lights were quenched inside:
Henceforth I asked God counsel, not mankind.

So, when I made the effort, saved myself,

They said—" No care to save appearance here !
" How cynic,—when, how wanton, were enough !"
—Adding, it all came of my mother's life—
My own real mother, whom I never knew,
Who did wrong (if she needs must have done wrong)
Through being all her life, not my four years,
At mercy of the hateful,—every beast
O' the field was wont to break that fountain-fence,
Trample the silver into mud so murk
Heaven could not find itself reflected there,—
Now they cry " Out on her, who, plashy pool,
" Bequeathed turbidity and bitterness
" To the daughter-stream where Guido dipt and drank !"

Well, since she had to bear this brand—let me !
The rather do I understand her now,—
From my experience of what hate calls love,—
Much love might be in what their love called hate.
If she sold . . what they call, sold . . me her child—
I shall believe she hoped in her poor heart
That I at least might try be good and pure,
Begin to live untempted, not go doomed

And done with ere once found in fault, as she.
Oh and, my mother, it all came to this?
Why should I trust those that speak ill of you,
When I mistrust who speaks even well of them?
Why, since all bound to do me good, did harm,
May not you, seeming as you harmed me most,
Have meant to do most good—and feed your child
From bramble-bush, whom not one orchard-tree
But drew-back bough from, nor let one fruit fall?
This it was for you sacrificed your babe?
Gained just this, giving your heart's hope away
As I might give mine, loving it as you,
If . . but that never could be asked of me!

There, enough! I have my support again,
Again the knowledge that my babe was, is,
Will be mine only. Him, by death, I give
Outright to God, without a further care,—
But not to any parent in the world,—
So to be safe: why is it we repine?
What guardianship were safer could we choose?
All human plans and projects come to nought,

My life, and what I know of other lives,
Prove that: no plan nor project! God shall care!

And now you are not tired? How patient then
All of you,—Oh yes, patient this long while
Listening, and understanding, I am sure!
Four days ago, when I was sound and well
And like to live, no one would understand.
People were kind, but smiled "And what of him,
"Your friend, whose tonsure, the rich dark-brown hides?
"There, there!—your lover, do we dream he was?
"A priest too—never were such naughtiness!
"Still, he thinks many a long think, never fear,
"After the shy pale lady,—lay so light
"For a moment in his arms, the lucky one!"
And so on: wherefore should I blame you much?
So we are made, such difference in minds,
Such difference too in eyes that see the minds!
That man, you misinterpret and misprise—
The glory of his nature, I had thought,
Shot itself out in white light, blazed the truth
Through every atom of his act with me:

Yet where I point you, through the chrystal shrine,
Purity in quintessence, one dew-drop,
You all descry a spider in the midst.
One says, "The head of it is plain to see,"
And one, "They are the feet by which I judge,"
All say, "Those films were spun by nothing else."

Then, I must lay my babe away with God,
Nor think of him again for gratitude.
Yes my last breath shall wholly spend itself
In one attempt more to disperse the stain,
The mist from other breath fond mouths have made,
About a lustrous and pellucid soul:
So that, when I am gone but sorrow stays,
And people need assurance in their doubt
If God yet have a servant, man a friend,
The weak a saviour and the vile a foe,—
Let him be present, by the name invoked,
Giuseppe-Maria Caponsacchi!

There,
Strength comes already with the utterance!

I will remember once more for his sake
The sorrow: for he lives and is belied.
Could he be here, how he would speak for me!

I had been miserable three drear years
In that dread palace and lay passive now,
When I first learned there could be such a man.
Thus it fell: I was at a public play,
In the last days of Carnival last March,
Brought there I knew not why, but now know well.
My husband put me where I sat, in front;
Then crouched down, breathed cold through me from behind,
Stationed i' the shadow,—none in front could see,—
I, it was, faced the stranger-throng beneath,
The crowd with upturned faces, eyes one stare,
Voices one buzz. I looked but to the stage,
Whereon two lovers sang and interchanged
"True life is only love, love only bliss:
"I love thee—thee I love!" then they embraced.
I looked thence to the ceiling and the walls,—
Over the crowd, those voices and those eyes,—

My thoughts went through the roof and out, to Rome
On wings of music, waft of measured words,—
Set me down there, a happy child again,
Sure that to-morrow would be festa-day,
Hearing my parents praise past festas more,
And seeing they were old if I was young,
Yet wondering why they still would end discourse
With "We must soon go, you abide your time,
"And,—might we haply see the proper friend
"Throw his arm over you and make you safe!"

Sudden I saw him; into my lap there fell
A foolish twist of comfits, broke my dream
And brought me from the air and laid me low,
As ruined as the soaring bee that 's reached
(So Pietro told me at the Villa once)
By the dust-handful. There the comfits lay:
I looked to see who flung them, and I faced
This Caponsacchi, looking up in turn.
Ere I could reason out why, I felt sure,
Whoever flung them, his was not the hand,—
Up rose the round face and good-natured grin

Of one who, in effect, had played the prank,
From covert close beside the earnest face,—
Fat waggish Conti, friend of all the world.
He was my husband's cousin, privileged
To throw the thing: the other, silent, grave,
Solemn almost, saw me, as I saw him.

There is a psalm Don Celestine recites,
" Had I a dove's wings, how I fain would flee ! "
The psalm runs not " I hope, I pray for wings,"—
Not " If wings fall from heaven, I fix them fast,"—
Simply " How good it were to fly and rest,
" Have hope now, and one day expect content !
" How well to do what I shall never do ! "
So I said " Had there been a man like that,
" To lift me with his strength out of all strife
" Into the calm, how I could fly and rest !
" I have a keeper in the garden here
" Whose sole employment is to strike me low
" If ever I, for solace, seek the sun.
" Life means with me successful feigning death,
" Lying stone-like, eluding notice so,

" Forgoing here the turf and there the sky.
" Suppose that man had been instead of this ! "

Presently Conti laughed into my ear,
—Had tripped up to the raised place where I sat—
" Cousin, I flung them brutishly and hard !
" Because you must be hurt, to look austere
" As Caponsacchi yonder, my tall friend
" A-gazing now. Ah, Guido, you so close ?
" Keep on your knees, do ! Beg her to forgive !
" My cornet battered like a cannon-ball.
" Good-bye, I 'm gone ! "—nor waited the reply.

That night at supper, out my husband broke,
" Why was that throwing, that buffoonery ?
" Do you think I am your dupe ? What man would dare
" Throw comfits in a stranger lady's lap ?
" 'T was knowledge of you bred such insolence
" In Caponsacchi ; he dared shoot the bolt,
" Using that Conti for his stalking-horse.
" How could you see him this once and no more,
" When he is always haunting hereabout

" At the street-corner or the palace-side,
" Publishing my shame and your impudence ?
" You are a wanton,—I a dupe, you think ?
" O Christ, what hinders that I kill her quick ?"
Whereat he drew his sword and feigned a thrust.

All this, now,—being not so strange to me,
Used to such misconception day by day
And broken-in to bear,—I bore, this time,
More quietly than woman should perhaps ;
Repeated the mere truth and held my tongue.

Then he said, "Since you play the ignorant,
" I shall instruct you. This amour,—commenced
" Or finished or midway in act, all 's one,—
" 'T is the town-talk ; so my revenge shall be.
" Does he presume because he is a priest ?
" I warn him that the sword I wear shall pink
" His lily-scented cassock through and through,
" Next time I catch him underneath your eaves !"

But he had threatened with the sword so oft

And, after all, not kept his promise. All
I said was, " Let God save the innocent!
" Moreover, death is far from a bad fate.
" I shall go pray for you and me, not him;
" And then I look to sleep, come death or, worse,
" Life." So, I slept.

There may have elapsed a week,
When Margherita,—called my waiting-maid,
Whom it is said my husband found too fair—
Who stood and heard the charge and the reply,
Who never once would let the matter rest
From that night forward, but rang changes still
On this the thrust and that the shame, and how
Good cause for jealousy cures jealous fools,
And what a paragon was this same priest
She talked about until I stopped my ears,—
She said, " A week is gone; you comb your hair,
" Then go mope in a corner, cheek on palm,
" Till night comes round again,—so, waste a week
" As if your husband menaced you in sport.
" Have not I some acquaintance with his tricks?

" Oh no, he did not stab the serving-man
" Who made and sang the rhymes about me once!
" For why? They sent him to the wars next day.
" Nor poisoned he the foreigner, my friend,
" Who wagered on the whiteness of my breast,—
" The swarth skins of our city in dispute:
" For, though he paid me proper compliment,
" The Count well knew he was besotted with
" Somebody else, a skin as black as ink,
" (As all the town knew save my foreigner)
" He found and wedded presently,—'Why need
" 'Better revenge?'—the Count asked. But what 's here?
" A priest, that does not fight, and cannot wed,
" Yet must be dealt with! If the Count took fire
" For the poor pastime of a minute,—me—
" What were the conflagration for yourself,
" Countess and lady-wife and all the rest?
" The priest will perish; you will grieve too late:
" So shall the city-ladies' handsomest
" Frankest and liberalest gentleman
" Die for you, to appease a scurvy dog
" Hanging 's too good for. Is there no escape?

" Were it not simple Christian charity
" To warn the priest be on his guard,—save him
" Assured death, save yourself from causing it?
" I meet him in the street. Give me a glove,
" A ring to show for token! Mum's the word!"

I answered, " If you were, as styled, my maid,
" I would command you: as you are, you say,
" My husband's intimate,—assist his wife
" Who can do nothing but entreat 'Be still!'
" Even if you speak truth and a crime is planned,
" Leave help to God as I am forced to do!
" There is no other cause, or we should craze,
" Seeing such evil with no human cure.
" Reflect that God, who makes the storm desist,
" Can make an angry violent heart subside.
" Why should we venture teach Him governance?
" Never address me on this subject more!"

Next night she said, " But I went, all the same,
" —Ay, saw your Caponsacchi in his house,
" And come back stuffed with news I must outpour.

" I told him, 'Sir, my mistress is a stone:
" 'Why should you harm her for no good you get?
" 'For you do harm her—prowl about our place
" 'With the Count never distant half the street,
" 'Lurking at every corner, would you look!
" 'Tis certain she has witched you with a spell.
" 'Are there not other beauties at your beck?
" 'We all know, Donna This and Monna That
" 'Die for a glance of yours, yet here you gaze!
" 'Go make them grateful, leave the stone its cold!'
" And he—oh, he turned first white and then red,
" And then—'To her behest I bow myself,
" 'Whom I love with my body and my soul:
" 'Only a word i' the bowing! See, I write
" 'One little word, no harm to see or hear!
" 'Then, fear no further!' This is what he wrote.
" I know you cannot read,—therefore, let me!
" '*My idol!*" . . . .

But I took it from her hand
And tore it into shreds. " Why, join the rest
" Who harm me? Have I ever done you wrong?

" People have told me 't is you wrong myself:
" Let it suffice I either feel no wrong
" Or else forgive it,—yet you turn my foe!
" The others hunt me and you throw a noose!"

She muttered, " Have your wilful way!" I slept.

Whereupon . . no, I leave my husband out!
It is not to do him more hurt, I speak.
Let it suffice, when misery was most,
One day, I swooned and got a respite so.
She stooped as I was slowly coming to,
This Margherita, ever on my trace,
And whispered—" Caponsacchi!"

If I drowned,
But woke afloat i' the wave with upturned eyes,
And found their first sight was a star! I turned—
For the first time, I let her have her will,
Heard passively,—" The imposthume at such head,
" One touch, one lancet-puncture would relieve,—
" And still no glance the good physician's way

" Who rids you of the torment in a trice !
" Still he writes letters you refuse to hear.
" He may prevent your husband, kill himself,
" So desperate and all fordone is he !
" Just hear the pretty verse he made to-day !
" A sonnet from Mirtillo. '*Peerless fair . . .*'
" All poetry is difficult to read,
" —The sense of it is, anyhow, he seeks
" Leave to contrive you an escape from hell,
" And for that purpose asks an interview.
" I can write, I can grant it in your name,
" Or, what is better, lead you to his house.
" Your husband dashes you against the stones ;
" This man would place each fragment in a shrine :
" You hate him, love your husband ! "

I returned,

" It is not true I love my husband,—no,
" Nor hate this man. I listen while you speak,
" —Assured that what you say is false, the same :
" Much as when once, to me a little child,
" A rough gaunt man in rags, with eyes on fire,

" A crowd of boys and idlers at his heels,
" Rushed as I crossed the Square, and held my head
" In his two hands, ' Here 's she will let me speak!
" ' You little girl, whose eyes do good to mine,
" ' I am the Pope, am Sextus, now the Sixth ;
" ' And that Twelfth Innocent, proclaimed to-day,
" ' Is Lucifer disguised in human flesh !
" ' The angels, met in conclave, crowned me !'—thus
" He gibbered and I listened ; but I knew
" All was delusion, ere folks interposed
" ' Unfasten him, the maniac !' Thus I know
" All your report of Caponsacchi false,
" Folly or dreaming ; I have seen so much
" By that adventure at the spectacle,
" The face I fronted that one first, last time :
" He would belie it by such words and thoughts.
" Therefore while you profess to show him me,
" I ever see his own face. Get you gone ! "

" —That will I, nor once open mouth again,—
" No, by Saint Joseph and the Holy Ghost !
" On your head be the damage, so adieu ! "

And so more days, more deeds I must forget,
Till . . what a strange thing now is to declare!
Since I say anything, say all if true!
And how my life seems lengthened as to serve!
It may be idle or inopportune,
But, true?—why, what was all I said but truth,
Even when I found that such as are untrue
Could only take the truth in through a lie?
Now—I am speaking truth to the Truth's self:
God will lend credit to my words this time.

It had got half through April. I arose
One vivid daybreak,—who had gone to bed
In the old way my wont those last three years,
Careless until, the cup drained, I should die.
The last sound in my ear, the over-night,
Had been a something let drop on the sly
In prattle by Margherita, "Soon enough
"Gaieties end, now Easter 's past: a week,
"And the Archbishop gets him back to Rome,—
"Everyone leaves the town for Rome, this Spring,—
"Even Caponsacchi, out of heart and hope,

" Resigns himself and follows with the flock."
I heard this drop and drop like rain outside
Fast-falling through the darkness while she spoke :
So had I heard with like indifference,
" And Michael's pair of wings will arrive first
" At Rome, to introduce the company,
" And bear him from our picture where he fights
" Satan,—expect to have that dragon loose
" And never a defender ! "—my sole thought
Being still, as night came, " Done, another day !
" How good to sleep and so get nearer death ! "—
When, what, first thing at day-break, pierced the sleep
With a summons to me ? Up I sprang alive,
Light in me, light without me, everywhere
Change ! A broad yellow sun-beam was let fall
From heaven to earth,—a sudden drawbridge lay,
Along which marched a myriad merry motes,
Mocking the flies that crossed them and recrossed
In rival dance, companions new-born too.
On the house-eaves, a dripping shag of weed
Shook diamonds on each dull grey lattice-square,
As first one, then another bird leapt by,

And light was off, and lo was back again,
Always with one voice,—where are two such joys?—
The blessed building-sparrow! I stepped forth,
Stood on the terrace,—o'er the roofs, such sky!
My heart sang, "I too am to go away,
I too have something I must care about,
"Carry away with me to Rome, to Rome!
"The bird brings hither sticks and hairs and wool,
"And nowhere else i' the world; what fly breaks rank,
"Falls out of the procession that befits,
"From window here to window there, with all
"The world to choose,—so well he knows his course?
"I have my purpose and my motive too,
"My march to Rome, like any bird or fly!
"Had I been dead! How right to be alive!
"Last night I almost prayed for leave to die,
"Wished Guido all his pleasure with the sword
"Or the poison,—poison, sword, was but a trick,
"Harmless, may God forgive him the poor jest!
"My life is charmed, will last till I reach Rome!
"Yesterday, but for the sin,—ah, nameless be
"The deed I could have dared against myself!

" Now—see if I will touch an unripe fruit,
" And risk the health I want to have and use!
" Not to live, now, would be the wickedness,—
" For life means to make haste and go to Rome
" And leave Arezzo, leave all woes at once!"

Now, understand here, by no means mistake!
Long ago had I tried to leave that house
When it seemed such procedure would stop sin;
And still failed more the more I tried—at first
The Archbishop, as I told you,—next, our lord
The Governor,—indeed I found my way,
I went to the great palace where he rules,
Though I knew well 't was he who,—when I gave
A jewel or two, themselves had given me,
Back to my parents,—since they wanted bread,
They who had never let me want a nosegay,—he
Spoke of the jail for felons, if they kept
What was first theirs, then mine, so doubly theirs,
Though all the while my husband's most of all!
I knew well who had spoke the word wrought this:
Yet, being in extremity, I fled

To the Governor, as I say,—scarce opened lip
When—the cold cruel snicker close behind—
Guido was on my trace, already there,
Exchanging nod and wink for shrug and smile,
And I—pushed back to him and, for my pains,
Paid with . . but why remember what is past?
I sought out a poor friar the people call
The Roman, and confessed my sin which came
Of their sin,—that fact could not be repressed,—
The frightfulness of my despair in God:
And, feeling, through the grate, his horror shake,
Implored him, " Write for me who cannot write,
" Apprise my parents, make them rescue me!
" You bid me be courageous and trust God:
" Do you in turn dare somewhat, trust and write
" ' Dear friends, who used to be my parents once,
" ' And now declare you have no part in me,
" ' This is some riddle I want wit to solve,
" ' Since you must love me with no difference.
" ' Even suppose you altered,—there 's your hate,
" ' To ask for: hate of you two dearest ones
" ' I shall find liker love than love found here,

" ' If husbands love their wives. Take me away
" ' And hate me as you do the gnats and fleas,
" ' Even the scorpions ! How I shall rejoice !'
" Write that and save me !" And he promised—wrote
Or did not write ; things never changed at all :
He was not like the Augustinian here !
Last, in a desperation I appealed
To friends, whoever wished me better days,
To Guillichini, that 's of kin,—" What, I—
" Travel to Rome with you ? A flying gout
" Bids me deny my heart and mind my leg !"
Then I tried Conti, used to brave—laugh back
The louring thunder when his cousin scowled
At me protected by his presence : " You—
" Who well know what you cannot save me from,—
" Carry me off ! What frightens you, a priest ?"
He shook his head, looked grave—" Above my strength !
" Guido has claws that scratch, shows feline teeth ;
" A formidabler foe than I dare fret :
" Give me a dog to deal with, twice the size !
" Of course I am a priest and Canon too,
" But . . by the bye . . though both, not quite so bold

" As he, my fellow-Canon, brother-priest,
" The personage in such ill odour here
" Because of the reports—pure birth o' the brain!
" Our Caponsacchi, he 's your true Saint George
" To slay the monster, set the Princess free,
" And have the whole High-Altar to himself:
" I always think so when I see that piece
" I' the Pieve, that 's his church and mine, you know:
" Though you drop eyes at mention of his name!"

That name had got to take a half-grotesque
Half-ominous, wholly enigmatic sense,
Like any bye-word, broken bit of song
Born with a meaning, changed by mouth and mouth
That mix it in a sneer or smile, as chance
Bids, till it now means nought but ugliness
And perhaps shame.

—All this intends to say,
That, over-night, the notion of escape
Had seemed distemper, dreaming; and the name,—
Not the man, but the name of him, thus made

Into a mockery and disgrace,—why, she
Who uttered it persistently, had laughed,
" I name his name, and there you start and wince
" As criminal from the red tongs' touch !"—yet now,
Now, as I stood letting morn bathe me bright,
Choosing which butterfly should bear my news,—
The white, the brown one, or that tinier blue,—
The Margherita, I detested so,
In she came—" The fine day, the good Spring time !
" What, up and out at window ? That is best.
" No thought of Caponsacchi ?—who stood there
" All night on one leg, like the sentry crane,
" Under the pelting of your water-spout—
" Looked last look at your lattice ere he leave
" Our city, bury his dead hope at Rome.
" Ay, go to looking-glass and make you fine,
" While he may die ere touch one least loose hair
" You drag at with the comb in such a rage ! "

I turned—" Tell Caponsacchi he may come ! "

" Tell him to come ? Ah, but, for charity,

" A truce to fooling! Come? What,—come this eve?
" Peter and Paul! But I see through the trick!
" Yes, come, and take a flower-pot on his head,
" Flung from your terrace! No joke, sincere truth?"

How plainly I perceived hell flash and fade
O' the face of her,—the doubt that first paled joy,
Then, final reassurance I indeed
Was caught now, never to be free again!
What did I care?—who felt myself of force
To play with silk, and spurn the horsehair-springe.

" But—do you know that I have bade him come,
" And in your own name? I presumed so much,
" Knowing the thing you needed in your heart.
" But somehow—what had I to show in proof?
" He would not come: half-promised, that was all,
" And wrote the letters you refused to read.
" What is the message that shall move him now?"

" After the Ave Maria, at first dark,
" I will be standing on the terrace, say!"

" I would I had a good long lock of hair
" Should prove I was not lying ! Never mind ! "

Off she went—" May he not refuse, that 's all—
" Fearing a trick ! "

I answered, " He will come."
And, all day, I sent prayer like incense up
To God the strong, God the beneficent,
God ever mindful in all strife and strait,
Who, for our own good, makes the need extreme,
Till at the last He puts forth might and saves.
An old rhyme came into my head and rang
Of how a virgin, for the faith of God,
Hid herself, from the Paynims that pursued,
In a cave's heart ; until a thunderstone,
Wrapped in a flame, revealed the couch and prey :
And they laughed—" Thanks to lightning, ours at last ! "
And she cried, " Wrath of God, assert His love !
" Servant of God, thou fire, befriend His child ! "
And lo, the fire she grasped at, fixed its flash,
Lay in her hand a calm cold dreadful sword

She brandished till pursuers strewed the ground,
So did the souls within them die away,
As o'er the prostrate bodies, sworded, safe,
She walked forth to the solitudes and Christ:
So should I grasp the lightning and be saved!

And still, as the day wore, the trouble grew
Whereby I guessed there would be born a star,
Until at an intense throe of the dusk,
I started up, was pushed, I dare to say,
Out on the terrace, leaned and looked at last
Where the deliverer waited me: the same
Silent and solemn face, I first descried
At the spectacle, confronted mine once more.

So was that minute twice vouchsafed me, so
The manhood, wasted then, was still at watch
To save me yet a second time: no change
Here, though all else changed in the changing world!

I spoke on the instant, as my duty bade,
In some such sense as this, whatever the phrase.

" Friend, foolish words were borne from you to me ;
" Your soul behind them is the pure strong wind,
" Not dust and feathers which its breath may bear :
" These to the witless seem the wind itself,
" Since proving thus the first of it they feel.
" If by mischance you blew offence my way,
" The straws are dropt, the wind desists no whit,
" And how such strays were caught up in the street
" And took a motion from you, why inquire ?
" I speak to the strong soul, no weak disguise.
" If it be truth,—why should I doubt it truth ?—
" You serve God specially, as priests are bound,
" And care about me, stranger as I am,
" So far as wish my good,—that miracle
" I take to intimate He wills you serve
" By saving me,—what else can He direct ?
" Here is the service. Since a long while now,
" I am in course of being put to death :
" While death concerned nothing but me, I bowed
" The head and bade, in heart, my husband strike.
" Now I imperil something more, it seems,
" Something that 's trulier me than this myself,

" Something I trust in God and you to save.
" You go to Rome, they tell me : take me there,
" Put me back with my people ! "

He replied—
The first word I heard ever from his lips,
All himself in it,—an eternity
Of speech, to match the immeasurable depth
O' the soul that then broke silence—" I am yours."

So did the star rise, soon to lead my step,
Lead on, nor pause before it should stand still
Above the House o' the Babe,—my babe to be,
That knew me first and thus made me know him,
That had his right of life and claim on mine,
And would not let me die till he was born,
But pricked me at the heart to save us both,
Saying " Have you the will? Leave God the way ! "
And the way was Caponsacchi—" mine," thank God !
He was mine, he is mine, he will be mine.

No pause i' the leading and the light ! I know,

Next night there was a cloud came, and not he:
But I prayed through the darkness till it broke
And let him shine. The second night, he came.

" The plan is rash; the project desperate:
" In such a flight needs must I risk your life,
" Give food for falsehood, folly or mistake,
" Ground for your husband's rancour and revenge "—
So he began again, with the same face.
I felt that, the same loyalty—one star
Turning now red that was so white before—
One service apprehended newly: just
A word of mine and there the white was back!

" No, friend, for you will take me! 'T is yourself
" Risk all, not I,—who let you, for I trust
" In the compensating great God: enough!
" I know you: when is it that you will come?"

" To-morrow at the day's dawn." Then I heard
What I should do: how to prepare for flight
And where to fly.

That night my husband bade
" —You, whom I loathe, beware you break my sleep
" This whole night! Couch beside me like the corpse
" I would you were!" The rest you know, I think—
How I found Caponsacchi and escaped.

And this man, men call sinner? Jesus Christ!
Of whom men said, with mouths Thyself mad'st once,
" He hath a devil"—say he was Thy saint,
My Caponsacchi! Shield and show—unshroud
In Thine own time the glory of the soul
If aught obscure,—if ink-spot, from vile pens
Scribbling a charge against him—(I was glad
Then, for the first time, that I could not write)—
Flirted his way, have flecked the blaze!

For me,
'T is otherwise: let men take, sift my thoughts
—Thoughts I throw like the flax for sun to bleach!
I did pray, do pray, in the prayer shall die,
" Oh, to have Caponsacchi for my guide!"
Ever the face upturned to mine, the hand

Holding my hand across the world,—a sense
That reads, as only such can read, the mark
God sets on woman, signifying so
She should—shall peradventure—be divine;
Yet 'ware, the while, how weakness mars the print
And makes confusion, leaves the thing men see,
—Not this man sees,—who from his soul, re-writes
The obliterated charter,—love and strength
Mending what 's marred. "So kneels a votarist,
"Weeds some poor waste traditionary plot
"Where shrine once was, where temple yet may be,
"Purging the place but worshipping the while,
"By faith and not by sight, sight clearest so,—
"Such way the saints work,"—says Don Celestine.
But I, not privileged to see a saint
Of old when such walked earth with crown and palm,
If I call "saint" what saints call something else—
The saints must bear with me, impute the fault
To a soul i' the bud, so starved by ignorance,
Stinted of warmth, it will not blow this year
Nor recognize the orb which Spring-flowers know.
But if meanwhile some insect with a heart

Worth floods of lazy music, spendthrift joy—
Some fire-fly renounced Spring for my dwarfed cup,
Crept close to me, brought lustre for the dark,
Comfort against the cold,—what though excess
Of comfort should miscall the creature—sun?
What did the sun to hinder while harsh hands
Petal by petal, crude and colourless,
Tore me? This one heart gave me all the Spring!

Is all told? There 's the journey: and where 's time
To tell you how that heart burst out in shine?
Yet certain points do press on me too hard.
Each place must have a name, though I forget:
How strange it was—there where the plain begins
And the small river mitigates its flow—
When eve was fading fast, and my soul sank,
And he divined what surge of bitterness,
In overtaking me, would float me back
Whence I was carried by the striding day—
So,—" This grey place was famous once," said he—
And he began that legend of the place
As if in answer to the unspoken fear,

And told me all about a brave man dead,
Which lifted me and let my soul go on!
How did he know too,—at that town's approach
By the rock-side,—that in coming near the signs
Of life, the house-roofs and the church and tower,
I saw the old boundary and wall o' the world
Rise plain as ever round me, hard and cold,
As if the broken circlet joined again,
Tightened itself about me with no break,—
As if the town would turn Arezzo's self,—
The husband there,—the friends my enemies,
All ranged against me, not an avenue
To try, but would be blocked and drive me back
On him,—this other, . . oh the heart in that!
Did not he find, bring, put into my arms
A new-born babe?—and I saw faces beam
Of the young mother proud to teach me joy,
And gossips round expecting my surprise
At the sudden hole through earth that lets in heaven.
I could believe himself by his strong will
Had woven around me what I thought the world
We went along in, every circumstance,

Towns, flowers and faces, all things helped so well!
For, through the journey, was it natural
Such comfort should arise from first to last?
As I look back, all is one milky way;
Still bettered more, the more remembered, so
Do new stars bud while I but search for old,
And fill all gaps i' the glory, and grow him—
Him I now see make the shine everywhere.
Even at the last when the bewildered flesh,
The cloud of weariness about my soul
Clogging too heavily, sucked down all sense,—
Still its last voice was, "He will watch and care;
"Let the strength go, I am content: he stays!"
I doubt not he did stay and care for all—
From that sick minute when the head swam round,
And the eyes looked their last and died on him,
As in his arms he caught me, and, you say,
Carried me in, that tragical red eve,
And laid me where I next returned to life
In the other red of morning, two red plates
That crushed together, crushed the time between,
And are since then a solid fire to me,—

When in, my dreadful husband and the world
Broke,—and I saw him, master, by hell's right,
And saw my angel helplessly held back
By guards that helped the malice—the lamb prone,
The serpent towering and triumphant—then
Came all the strength back in a sudden swell,
I did for once see right, do right, give tongue
The adequate protest: for a worm must turn
If it would have its wrong observed by God.
I did spring up, attempt to thrust aside
That ice-block 'twixt the sun and me, lay low
The neutralizer of all good and truth.
If I sinned so,—never obey voice more
O' the Just and Terrible, who bids us—"Bear!"
Not—"Stand by, bear to see my angels bear!"
I am clear it was on impulse to serve God
Not save myself,—no—nor my child unborn!
Had I else waited patiently till now?—
Who saw my old kind parents, silly-sooth
And too much trustful, for their worst of faults,
Cheated, brow-beaten, stripped and starved, cast out
Into the kennel: I remonstrated,

Then sank to silence, for,—their woes at end,
Themselves gone,—only I was left to plague.
If only I was threatened and belied,
What matter? I could bear it and did bear;
It was a comfort, still one lot for all:
They were not persecuted for my sake
And I, estranged, the single happy one.
But when at last, all by myself I stood
Obeying the clear voice which bade me rise,
Not for my own sake but my babe unborn,
And take the angel's hand was sent to help—
And found the old adversary athwart the path—
Not my hand simply struck from the angel's, but
The very angel's self made foul i' the face
By the fiend who struck there,—that I would not bear,
That only I resisted! So, my first
And last resistance was invincible.
Prayers move God; threats, and nothing else, move men!
I must have prayed a man as he were God
When I implored the Governor to right
My parents' wrongs: the answer was a smile.

The Archbishop,—did I clasp his feet enough,
Hide my face hotly on them, while I told
More than I dared make my own mother know?
The profit was—compassion and a jest.
This time, the foolish prayers were done with, right
Used might, and solemnized the sport at once.
All was against the combat: vantage, mine?
The runaway avowed, the accomplice-wife,
In company with the plan-contriving priest?
Yet, shame thus rank and patent, I struck, bare,
At foe from head to foot in magic mail,
And off it withered, cobweb-armoury
Against the lightning! 'T was truth singed the lies
And saved me, not the vain sword nor weak speech!

You see, I will not have the service fail!
I say, the angel saved me: I am safe!
Others may want and wish, I wish nor want
One point o' the circle plainer, where I stand
Traced round about with white to front the world.
What of the calumny I came across,
What o' the way to the end?—the end crowns all.

The judges judged aright i' the main, gave me
The uttermost of my heart's desire, a truce
From torture and Arezzo, balm for hurt,
With the quiet nuns,—God recompense the good!
Who said and sang away the ugly past.
And, when my final fortune was revealed,
What safety while, amid my parents' arms,
My babe was given me! Yes, he saved my babe:
It would not have peeped forth, the bird-like thing,
Through that Arezzo noise and trouble: back
Had it returned nor ever let me see!
But the sweet peace cured all, and let me live
And give my bird the life among the leaves
God meant him! Weeks and months of quietude,
I could lie in such peace and learn so much—
Begin the task, I see how needful now,
Of understanding somewhat of my past,—
Know life a little, I should leave so soon.
Therefore, because this man restored my soul,
All has been right; I have gained my gain, enjoyed
As well as suffered,—nay, got foretaste too
Of better life beginning where this ends—

All through the breathing-while allowed me thus,
Which let good premonitions reach my soul
Unthwarted, and benignant influence flow
And interpenetrate and change my heart,
Uncrossed by what was wicked,—nay, unkind.
For, as the weakness of my time drew nigh,
Nobody did me one disservice more,
Spoke coldly or looked strangely, broke the love
I lay in the arms of, till my boy was born,
Born all in love, with nought to spoil the bliss
A whole long fortnight: in a life like mine
A fortnight filled with bliss is long and much.
All women are not mothers of a boy,
Though they live twice the length of my whole life,
And, as they fancy, happily all the same.
There I lay, then, all my great fortnight long,
As if it would continue, broaden out
Happily more and more, and lead to heaven:
Christmas before me,—was not that a chance?
I never realized God's birth before—
How He grew likest God in being born.
This time I felt like Mary, had my babe

Lying a little on my breast like hers.
So all went on till, just four days ago—
The night and the tap.

O it shall be success
To the whole of our poor family! My friends
. . Nay, father and mother,—give me back my word!
They have been rudely stripped of life, disgraced
Like children who must needs go clothed too fine,
Carry the garb of Carnival in Lent:
If they too much affected frippery,
They have been punished and submit themselves,
Say no word: all is over, they see God
Who will not be extreme to mark their fault
Or He had granted respite: they are safe.

For that most woeful man my husband once,
Who, needing respite, still draws vital breath,
I—pardon him? So far as lies in me,
I give him for his good the life he takes,
Praying the world will therefore acquiesce.
Let him make God amends,—none, none to me

Who thank him rather that, whereas strange fate
Mockingly styled him husband and me wife,
Himself this way at least pronounced divorce,
Blotted the marriage-bond: this blood of mine
Flies forth exultingly at any door,
Washes the parchment white, and thanks the blow.
We shall not meet in this world nor the next,
But where will God be absent? In His face
Is light, but in His shadow healing too:
Let Guido touch the shadow and be healed!
And as my presence was importunate,—
My earthly good, temptation and a snare,—
Nothing about me but drew somehow down
His hate upon me,—somewhat so excused
Therefore, since hate was thus the truth of him,—
May my evanishment for evermore
Help further to relieve the heart that cast
Such object of its natural loathing forth!
So he was made; he nowise made himself:
I could not love him, but his mother did.
His soul has never lain beside my soul;
But for the unresisting body,—thanks!

He burned that garment spotted by the flesh!
Whatever he touched is rightly ruined: plague
It caught, and disinfection it had craved
Still but for Guido; I am saved through him
So as by fire; to him—thanks and farewell!

Even for my babe, my boy, there's safety thence—
From the sudden death of me, I mean: we poor
Weak souls, how we endeavour to be strong!
I was already using up my life,—
This portion, now, should do him such a good,
This other go to keep off such an ill!
The great life; see, a breath and it is gone!
So is detached, so left all by itself
The little life, the fact which means so much.
Shall not God stoop the kindlier to His work,
His marvel of creation, foot would crush,
Now that the hand He trusted to receive
And hold it, lets the treasure fall perforce?
The better; He shall have in orphanage
His own way all the clearlier: if my babe
Outlived the hour—and he has lived two weeks—

It is through God who knows I am not by.
Who is it makes the soft gold hair turn black,
And sets the tongue, might lie so long at rest,
Trying to talk? Let us leave God alone!
Why should I doubt He will explain in time
What I feel now, but fail to find the words?
My babe nor was, nor is, nor yet shall be
Count Guido Franceschini's child at all—
Only his mother's, born of love not hate!
So shall I have my rights in after-time.
It seems absurd, impossible to-day;
So seems so much else, not explained but known!

Ah! Friends, I thank and bless you every one!
No more now: I withdraw from earth and man
To my own soul, compose myself for God.

Well, and there is more! Yes, my end of breath
Shall bear away my soul in being true!
He is still here, not outside with the world,
Here, here, I have him in his rightful place!
'T is now, when I am most upon the move,

I feel for what I verily find—again
The face, again the eyes, again, through all,
The heart and its immeasurable love
Of my one friend, my only, all my own,
Who put his breast between the spears and me.
Ever with Caponsacchi! Otherwise
Here alone would be failure, loss to me—
How much more loss to him, with life debarred
From giving life, love locked from love's display,
The day-star stopped its task that makes night morn!
O lover of my life, O soldier-saint,
No work begun shall ever pause for death!
Love will be helpful to me more and more
I' the coming course, the new path I must tread,
My weak hand in thy strong hand, strong for that!
Tell him that if I seem without him now,
That 's the world's insight! Oh, he understands!
He is at Civita—do I once doubt
The world again is holding us apart?
He had been here, displayed in my behalf
The broad brow that reverberates the truth,
And flashed the word God gave him, back to man!

I know where the free soul is flown! My fate
Will have been hard for even him to bear:
Let it confirm him in the trust of God,
Showing how holily he dared the deed!
And, for the rest,—say, from the deed, no touch
Of harm came, but all good, all happiness,
Not one faint fleck of failure! Why explain?
What I see, oh, he sees and how much more!
Tell him,—I know not wherefore the true word
Should fade and fall unuttered at the last—
It was the name of him I sprang to meet
When came the knock, the summons and the end.
"My great heart, my strong hand are back again!"
I would have sprung to these, beckoning across
Murder and hell gigantic and distinct
O' the threshold, posted to exclude me heaven:
He is ordained to call and I to come!
Do not the dead wear flowers when dressed for God?
Say,—I am all in flowers from head to foot!
Say,—not one flower of all he said and did,
Might seem to flit unnoticed, fade unknown,
But dropped a seed, has grown a balsam-tree

Whereof the blossoming perfumes the place
At this supreme of moments! He is a priest;
He cannot marry therefore, which is right:
I think he would not marry if he could.
Marriage on earth seems such a counterfeit,
Mere imitation of the inimitable:
In heaven we have the real and true and sure.
'T is there they neither marry nor are given
In marriage but are as the angels: right,
Oh how right that is, how like Jesus Christ
To say that! Marriage-making for the earth,
With gold so much,—birth, power, repute so much,
Or beauty, youth so much, in lack of these!
Be as the angels rather, who, apart,
Know themselves into one, are found at length
Married, but marry never, no, nor give
In marriage; they are man and wife at once
When the true time is: here we have to wait
Not so long neither! Could we by a wish
Have what we will and get the future now,
Would we wish aught done undone in the past?
So, let him wait God's instant men call years;

Meantime hold hard by truth and his great soul,
Do out the duty! Through such souls alone
God stooping shows sufficient of His light
For us i' the dark to rise by. And I rise. 1845

VIII.

DOMINUS HYACINTHUS DE ARCHANGELIS,

PAUPERUM PROCURATOR.

Ah, my Giacinto, he 's no ruddy rogue,
Is not Cinone? What, to-day we 're eight?
Seven and one 's eight, I hope, old curly-pate!
—Branches me out his verb-tree on the slate,
Amo -as -avi -atum -are -ans,
Up to *-aturus*, person, tense, and mood,
*Qui*es *me cum subjunctivo* (I could cry)
And chews Corderius with his morning crust!
Look eight years onward, and he 's perched, he 's perched
Dapper and deft on stool beside this chair,

Cinozzo, Cinoncello, who but he?
—Trying his milk-teeth on some crusty case
Like this, papa shall triturate full soon
To smooth Papinianian pulp!
It trots
Aiready through my head, though noon be now,
Does supper-time and what belongs to eve.
Dispose, O Don, o' the day, first work then play!
—The proverb bids. And "then" means, won't we hold
Our little yearly lovesome frolic feast,
Cinuolo's birth-night, Cinicello's own,
That makes gruff January grin perforce!
For too contagious grows the mirth, the warmth
Escaping from so many hearts at once—
When the good wife, buxom and bonny yet,
Jokes the hale grandsire,—such are just the sort
To go off suddenly,—he who hides the key
O' the box beneath his pillow every night,—
Which box may hold a parchment (some one thinks)
Will show a scribbled something like a name
" Cinino, Ciniccino," near the end,

" To whom I give and I bequeath my lands,
" Estates, tenements, hereditaments,
" When I decease as honest grandsire ought."
Wherefore—yet this one time again perhaps—
Sha'n't my Orvieto fuddle his old nose!
Then, uncles, one or the other, well i' the world,
May—drop in, merely?—trudge through rain and wind,
Rather! The smell-feasts rouse them at the hint
There 's cookery in a certain dwelling-place!
Gossips, too, each with keepsake in his poke,
Will pick the way, thrid lane by lantern-light,
And so find door, put galligaskin off
At entry of a decent domicile
Cornered in snug Condotti,—all for love,
All to crush cup with Cinucciatolo!
Well,
Let others climb the heights o' the court, the camp!
How vain are chambering and wantonness,
Revel and rout and pleasures that make mad!
Commend me to home-joy, the family board,
Altar and hearth! These, with a brisk career,
A source of honest profit and good fame,

Just so much work as keeps the brain from rust,
Just so much play as lets the heart expand,
Honouring God and serving man,—I say,
These are reality, and all else,—fluff,
Nutshell and naught,—thank Flaccus for the phrase!
Suppose I had been Fisc, yet bachelor!

Why, work with a will, then! Wherefore lazy now?
Turn up the hour-glass, whence no sand-grain slips
But should have done its duty to the saint
O' the day, the son and heir that 's eight years old!
Let law come dimple Cinoncino's cheek,
And Latin dumple Cinarello's chin,
The while we spread him fine and toss him flat
This pulp that makes the pancake, trim our mass
Of matter into Argument the First,
Prime Pleading in defence of our accused,
Which, once a-waft on paper wing, shall soar,
Shall signalise before applausive Rome
What study, and mayhap some mother-wit,
Can do toward making Master fop and Fisc
Old bachelor Bottinius bite his thumb.

Now, how good God is! How falls plumb to point
This murder, gives me Guido to defend
Now, of all days i' the year, just when the boy
Verges on Virgil, reaches the right age
For some such illustration from his sire,
Stimulus to himself! One might wait years
And never find the chance which now finds me!
The fact is, there 's a blessing on the hearth,
A special providence for fatherhood!
Here 's a man, and what 's more, a noble, kills
—Not sneakingly but almost with parade—
Wife's father and wife's mother and wife's self
That 's mother's self of son and heir (like mine!)
—And here stand I, the favoured advocate,
Who pluck this flower o' the field, no Solomon
Was ever clothed in glorious gold to match,
And set the same in Cinoncino's cap!
I defend Guido and his comrades—I!
Pray God, I keep me humble: not to me—
Non nobis, Domine, sed tibi laus!
How the fop chuckled when they made him Fisc!
We 'll beat you, my Bottinius, all for love,

All for our tribute to Cinotto's day!
Why, 'sbuddikins, old Innocent himself
May rub his eyes at the bustle,—ask "What 's this
"Rolling from out the rostrum, as a gust
"O' the *Pro Milone* had been prisoned there,
"And rattled Rome awake?" Awaken Rome,
How can the Pope doze on in decency?
He needs must wake up also, speak his word,
Have his opinion like the rest of Rome,
About this huge, this hurly-burly case:
He wants who can excogitate the truth,
Give the result in speech, plain black and white,
To mumble in the mouth and make his own
—A little changed, good man, a little changed!
No matter, so his gratitude be moved,
By when my Giacintino gets of age,
Mindful of who thus helped him at a pinch,
Archangelus *Procurator Pauperum*—
And proved Hortensius *Redivivus!*
Whew!
To earn the *Est-est*, merit the minced herb
That mollifies the liver's leathery slice,

With here a goose foot, there a cock's-comb stuck,
Cemented in an element of cheese !
I doubt if dainties do the grandsire good :
Last June he had a sort of strangling . . . bah !
He 's his own master, and his will is made.
So, liver fizz, law flit and Latin fly
As we rub hands o'er dish by way of grace !
May I lose cause if I vent one word more
Except,—with fresh-cut quill we ink the white,—
P-r-o-pro Guidone et Sociis. There !

Count Guido married—or, in Latin due,
What ? *Duxit in uxorem ?*—commonplace !
Tædas jugales iniit, subiit,—ha !
He underwent the matrimonial torch ?
Connubio stabili sibi junxit,—hum !
In stable bond of marriage bound his own ?
That 's clear of any modern taint : and yet . . .

Virgil is little help to who writes prose.
He shall attack me Terence with the dawn,
Shall Cinuccino ! Mum, mind business, Sir !

Thus circumstantially evolve we facts,
Ita se habet ideo series facti :
He wedded,—ah, with owls for augury !
Nupserat, heu sinistris avibus,
One of the blood Arezzo boasts her best,
Dominus Guido, nobili genere ortus,
Pompiliæ . . .

But the version afterward !
Curb we this ardour ! Notes alone, to-day,
The speech to-morrow and the Latin last :
Such was the rule in Farinacci's time.
Indeed I hitched it into verse and good.
Unluckily, law quite absorbs a man,
Or else I think I too had poetized.
" Law is the pork substratum of the fry,
" Goose-foot and cock's-comb are Latinity,"—
And in this case, if circumstance assist,
We 'll garnish law with idiom, never fear !
Out-of-the-way events extend our scope :
For instance, when Bottini brings his charge,
" That letter which you say Pompilia wrote,

" To criminate her parents and herself
" And disengage her husband from the coil,—
" That, Guido Franceschini wrote, say we :
" Because Pompilia could nor read nor write,
" Therefore he pencilled her such letter first,
" Then made her trace in ink the same again."
—Ha, my Bottini, have I thee on hip ?
How will he turn this and break Tully's pate ?
" *Existimandum* " (do n't I hear the dog !)
" *Quod Guido designaverit elementa*
" *Dictæ epistolæ, quæ fuerint*
" (*Superinducto ab ea calamo*)
" *Notata atramento* "—there 's a style !—
" *Quia ipsa scribere nesciebat.*" Boh !
Now, my turn ! Either, *Insulse !* (I outburst)
Stupidly put ! Inane is the response,
Inanis est responsio, or the like—
To-wit, that each of all those characters,
Quod singula elementa epistolæ,
Had first of all been traced for her by him,
Fuerant per eum prius designata,
And then, the ink applied a-top of that,

Et deinde, superinducto calamo,
The piece, she says, became her handiwork,
Per eam, efformata, ut ipsa asserit.
Inane were such response! (a second time:)
Her husband outlined her the whole, forsooth?
Vir ejus lineabat epistolam?
What, she confesses that she wrote the thing,
Fatetur eam scripsisse, (scorn that scathes!)
That she might pay obedience to her lord?
Ut viro obtemperaret, apices
(Here repeat charge with proper varied phrase)
Eo designante, ipsaque calamum
Super inducente? By such argument,
Ita pariter, she seeks to show the same,
(Ay, by Saint Joseph and what saints you please)
Epistolam ostendit, medius fidius,
No voluntary deed but fruit of force!
Non voluntarie sed coacte scriptam!
That 's the way to write Latin, friend my Fisc!
Bottini is a beast, one barbarous:
Look out for him when he attempts to say
"Armed with a pistol, Guido followed her!"

Will not I be beforehand with my Fisc,
Cut away phrase by phrase from underfoot!
Guido Pompiliam—Guido thus his wife
Following with igneous engine, shall I have?
Armis munitus igneis persequens—
Arma sulphurea gestans, sulphury arms,
Or, might one style a pistol—popping-piece?
Armatus breviori sclopulo?
We 'll let him have been armed so, though it make
Somewhat against us: I had thought to own—
Provided with a simple travelling-sword,
Ense solummodo viatorio
Instructus: but we 'll grant the pistol here:
Better we lost the cause than lacked the gird
At the Fisc's Latin, lost the Judge's laugh!
It 's Venturini that decides for style.
Tommati rather goes upon the law.
So, as to law,—

Ah, but with law ne'er hope
To level the fellow,—do 'nt I know his trick!
How he draws up, ducks under, twists aside!

He 's a lean-gutted hectic rascal, fine
As pale-haired red-eyed ferret which pretends
'T is ermine, pure soft snow from tail to snout.
He eludes law by piteous looks aloft,
Lets Latin glance off as he makes appeal
To saint that 's somewhere in the ceiling-top,—
Do you suppose I do n't conceive the beast?
Plague of the ermine-vermin! For it takes,
It takes, and here 's the fellow Fisc, you see,
And Judge, you 'll not be long in seeing next!
Confound the fop—he 's now at work like me:
Enter his study, as I seem to do,
Hear him read out his writing to himself!
I know he writes as if he spoke: I hear
The hoarse shrill throat, see shut eyes, neck shot-forth,
—I see him strain on tiptoe, soar and pour
Eloquence out, nor stay nor stint at all—
Perorate in the air, then quick to press
With the product! What abuse of type and sheet!
He 'll keep clear of my cast, my logic-throw,
Let argument slide, and then deliver swift
Some bowl from quite an unguessed point of stand—

Having the luck o' the last word, the reply!
A plaguy cast, a mortifying stroke:
You face a fellow—cries "So, there you stand?
"But I discourteous jump clean o'er your head!
"You take ship-carpentry for pilotage,
"Stop rat-holes, while a sea sweeps through the breach,—
"Hammer and fortify at puny points!
"Do, clamp and tenon, make all tight and safe!
"'T is here and here and here you ship a sea,
"No good of your stopped leaks and littleness!"

Yet what do I name "little and a leak?"
The main defence o' the murder 's used to death,
By this time, dry bare bones, no scrap we pick:
Safer I worked the new, the unforeseen,
The nice bye-stroke, the fine and improvised
Point that can titillate the brain o' the Bench
Torpid with over-teaching, long ago!
As if Tommati (that has heard, reheard
And heard again, first this side and then that—
Guido and Pietro, Pietro and Guido, din
And deafen, full three years, at each long ear)

Do n't want amusement for instruction now,
Won't rather feel a flea run o'er his ribs,
Than a daw settle heavily on his head!
Oh, I was young and had the trick of fence,
Knew subtle pass and push with careless right—
My left arm ever quiet behind back,
With dagger ready: not both hands to blade!
Puff and blow, put the strength out, Blunderbore!
There 's my subordinate, young Spreti, now,
Pedant and prig,—he 'll pant away at proof,
That 's his way!

Now for mine—to rub some life
Into one's choppy fingers this cold day!
I trust Cinuzzo ties on tippet, guards
The precious throat on which so much depends!
Guido must be all goose-flesh in his hole,
Despite the prison-straw: bad Carnival
For captives! no sliced fry for him, poor Count!

Carnival-time,—another providence!
The town a-swarm with strangers to amuse,

To edify, to give one's name and fame
In charge of, till they find, some future day,
Cintino come and claim it, his name too,
Pledge of the pleasantness they owe papa—
Who else was it cured Rome of her great qualms,
When she must needs have her own judgment?—ay,
When all her topping wits had set to work,
Pronounced already on the case: mere boys,
Twice Cineruggiolo's age with half his sense,
As good as tell me, when I cross the court,
" Master Arcangeli!" (plucking at my gown)
" We can predict, we comprehend your play,
" We 'll help you save your client." Tra-la-la!
I 've travelled ground, from childhood to this hour,
To have the town anticipate my track!
The old fox takes the plain and velvet path,
The young hound's predilection,—prints the dew,
Do n't he, to suit their pulpy pads of paw?
No! Burying nose deep down i' the briery bush,
Thus I defend Count Guido.

Where are we weak?

First, which is foremost in advantage too,

Our murder, we call, killing,—is a fact
Confessed, defended, made a boast of: good!
To think the Fisc claimed use of torture here,
And got thereby avowal plump and plain
That gives me just the chance I wanted,—scope
Not for brute-force but ingenuity,
Explaining matters, not denying them!
One may dispute,—as I am bound to do,
And shall,—validity of process here:
Inasmuch as a noble is exempt
From torture which plebeians undergo
In such a case: for law is lenient, lax,
Remits the torture to a nobleman
Unless suspicion be of twice the strength
Attaches to a man born vulgarly:
We do n't card silk with comb that dresses wool.
Moreover, 't was severity undue
In this case, even had the lord been lout.
What utters, on this head, our oracle,
Our Farinacci, my Gamaliel erst,
In those immortal "Questions?" This I quote:
"Of all the tools at Law's disposal, sure

" That named *Vigiliarum* is the best—
" That is, the worst—to whoso needs must bear:
" Lasting, as it may do, from some seven hours
" To ten; (beyond ten, we 've no precedent;
" Certain have touched their ten but, bah, they died!)
" It does so efficaciously convince,
" That,—speaking by much observation here,—
" Out of each hundred cases, by my count,
" Never I knew of patients beyond four
" Withstand its taste, or less than ninety-six
" End by succumbing: only martyrs four,
" Of obstinate silence, guilty or no,—against
" Ninety-six full confessors, innocent
" Or otherwise,—so shrewd a tool have we!"
No marvel either: in unwary hands,
Death on the spot is no rare consequence:
As indeed all but happened in this case
To one of ourselves, our young tough peasant-friend
The accomplice called Baldeschi: they were rough,
Dosed him with torture as you drench a horse,
Not modify your treatment to a man:
So, two successive days he fainted dead,

And only on the third essay, gave up,
Confessed like flesh and blood. We could reclaim,—
Blockhead Bottini giving cause enough!
But no,—we 'll take it as spontaneously
Confessed: we 'll have the murder beyond doubt.
Ah, fortunate (the poet's word reversed)
Inasmuch as we know our happiness!
Had the antagonist left dubiety,
Here were we proving murder a mere myth,
And Guido innocent, ignorant, absent,—ay,
Absent! He was—why, where should Christian be?—
Engaged in visiting his proper church,
The duty of us all at Christmas-time,
When Caponsacchi, the seducer, stung
To madness by his relegation, cast
About him and contrived a remedy
In murder: since opprobrium broke afresh,
By birth o' the babe, on him the imputed sire,
He it was quietly sought to smother up
His shame and theirs together,—killed the three,
And fled—(go seek him where you please to search)—
Just at the time when Guido, touched by grace,

Devotions ended, hastened to the spot,
Meaning to pardon his convicted wife,
" Neither do I condemn thee, go in peace ! "—
And thus arrived i' the nick of time to catch
The charge o' the killing, though great-heartedly
He came but to forgive and bring to life.
Doubt ye the force of Christmas on the soul ?
" Is thine eye evil because mine is good ? "

So, doubtless, had I needed argue here
But for the full confession round and sound !
Thus might you wrong some kingly alchemist,—
Whose concern should not be with showing brass
Transmuted into gold, but triumphing,
Rather, about his gold changed out of brass,
Not vulgarly to the mere sight and touch,
But in the idea, the spiritual display,
The apparition buoyed by winged words
Hovering above its birth-place in the brain,—
Thus would you wrong this excellent personage
Forced, by the gross need, to gird apron round,
Plant forge, light fire, ply bellows,—in a word,

Demonstrate : when a faulty pipkin's crack
May disconcert you his presumptive truth !
Here were I hanging to the testimony
Of one of these poor rustics—four, ye gods !
Whom the first taste of friend the Fiscal's cord
May drive into undoing my whole speech,
Undoing, on his birthday,—what is worse,—
My son and heir !
I wonder, all the same,
Not so much at those peasants' lack of heart ;
But—Guido Franceschini, nobleman,
Bear pain no better ! Everybody knows
It used once, when my father was a boy,
To form a proper, nay, important point
I' the education of our well-born youth,
That they took torture handsomely at need,
Without confessing in this clownish guise.
Each noble had his rack for private use,
And would, for the diversion of a guest,
Bid it be set up in the yard of arms,
And take thereon his hour of exercise,—
Command the varletry stretch, strain their best,

While friends looked on, admired my lord could smile
'Mid tugging which had caused an ox to roar.
Men are no longer men!

—And advocates
No longer Farinacci, let us add,
If I one more time fly from point proposed!
So, *Vindicatio*,—here begins the speech!—
Honoris causa; thus we make our stand:
Honour in us had injury, we prove.
Or if we fail to prove such injury
More than misprision of the fact,—what then?
It is enough, authorities declare,
If the result, the deed in question now,
Be caused by confidence that injury
Is veritable and no figment: since,
What, though proved fancy afterward, seemed fact
At the time, they argue shall excuse result.
That which we do, persuaded of good cause
For what we do, hold justifiable!—
The casuists bid: man, bound to do his best,
They would not have him leave that best undone

And mean to do his worst,—though fuller light
Show best was worst and worst would have been best.
Act by the present light!—they ask of man.
Ultra quod hic non agitur, besides
It is not anyway our business here,
De probatione adulterii,
To prove what we thought crime was crime indeed,
Ad irrogandam pœnam, and require
Its punishment: such nowise do we seek:
Sed ad effectum, but 't is our concern,
Excusandi, here to simply find excuse,
Occisorem, for who did the killing-work,
Et ad illius defensionem, (mark
The difference) and defend the man, just that!
Quo casu levior probatio
Exuberaret, to which end far lighter proof
Suffices than the prior case would claim:
It should be always harder to convict,
In short, than to establish innocence.
Therefore we shall demonstrate first of all
That Honour is a gift of God to man
Precious beyond compare: which natural sense

Of human rectitude and purity,—
Which white, man's soul is born with,—brooks no touch:
Therefore, the sensitivest spot of all,
Wounded by any wafture breathed from black,
Is,—honour within honour, like the eye
Centred i' the ball,—the honour of our wife.
Touch us o' the pupil of our honour, then,
Not actually,—since so you slay outright,—
But by a gesture simulating touch,
Presumable mere menace of such taint,—
This were our warrant for eruptive ire
" To whose dominion I impose no end."

(Virgil, now, should not be too difficult
To Cinoncino,—say, the early books.
Pen, truce to further gambols! *Poscimur!*)

Nor can revenge of injury done here
To the honour proved the life and soul of us,
Be too excessive, too extravagant:
Such wrong seeks and must have complete revenge.
Show we this, first, on the mere natural ground:

Begin at the beginning, and proceed
Incontrovertibly. Theodoric,
In an apt sentence Cassiodorus cites,
Propounds for basis of all household law—
I hardly recollect it, but it ends,
" Bird mates with bird, beast genders with his like,
" And brooks no interference." Bird and beast?
The very insects . . . if they wive or no,
How dare I say when Aristotle doubts?
But the presumption is they likewise wive,
At least the nobler sorts; for take the bee
As instance,—copying King Solomon,—
Why that displeasure of the bee to aught
Which savours of incontinency, makes
The unchaste a very horror to the hive?
Whence comes it bees obtain their epithet
Of *castæ apes*, notably " the chaste?"
Because, ingeniously saith Scaliger,
(The young sage,—see his book of Table-talk)
" Such is their hatred of immodest act,
" They fall upon the offender, sting to death."
I mind a passage much confirmative

I' the Idyllist (though I read him Latinized)
" Why " asks a shepherd, " is this bank unfit
" For celebration of our vernal loves ? "
" Oh swain," returns the instructed shepherdess,
" Bees swarm here, and would quick resent our warmth ! "
Only cold-blooded fish lack instinct here,
Nor gain nor guard connubiality :
But beasts, quadrupedal, mammiferous,
Do credit to their beasthood : witness him
That Ælian cities, the noble elephant,
(Or if not Ælian, somebody as sage)
Who seeing, much offence beneath his nose,
His master's friend exceed in courtesy
The due allowance to his master's wife,
Taught them good manners and killed both at once,
Making his master and the world admire.
Indubitably, then, that master's self,
Favoured by circumstance, had done the same
Or else stood clear rebuked by his own beast.
Adeo, ut qui honorem spernit, thus,
Who values his own honour not a straw,—
Et non recuperare curat, nor

Labours by might and main to salve its wound,
Se ulciscendo, by revenging him,
Nil differat a belluis, is a brute,
Quinimo irrationabilior
Ipsismet belluis, nay, contrariwise,
Much more irrational than brutes themselves,
Should be considered, *reputetur!* How?
If a poor animal feel honour smart,
Taught by blind instinct nature plants in him,
Shall man,—confessed creation's master-stroke,
Nay, intellectual glory, nay, a god,
Nay, of the nature of my Judges here,—
Shall man prove the insensible, the block,
The blot o' the earth he crawls on to disgrace?
(Come, that 's both solid and poetic!) Man
Derogate, live for the low tastes alone,
Mean creeping cares about the animal life?
Absit, such homage to vile flesh and blood!

(May Gigia have remembered, nothing stings
Fried liver out of its monotony
Of richness, like a root of fennel, chopped

Fine with the parsley: parsley-sprigs, I said—
Was there need I should say "and fennel too?"
But no, she cannot have been so obtuse!
To our argument! The fennel will be chopped.)

From beast to man next mount we—ay, but, mind,
Still mere man, not yet Christian,—that, in time!
Not too fast, mark you! 'T is on Heathen grounds
We next defend our act: then, fairly urge—
If this were done of old, in a green tree,
Allowed in the Spring rawness of our kind,
What may be licenced in the Autumn dry
And ripe, the latter harvest-tide of man?
If, with his poor and primitive half-lights,
The Pagan, whom our devils served for gods,
Could stigmatise the breach of marriage-vow
As that which blood, blood only might efface,—
Absolve the husband, outraged, whose revenge
Anticipated law, plied sword himself,—
How with the Christian in full blaze of noon?
Shall not he rather double penalty,
Multiply vengeance, than, degenerate,

Let privilege be minished, droop, decay?
Therefore set forth at large the ancient law!
Superabundant the examples be
To pick and choose from. The Athenian Code,
Solon's, the name is serviceable,—then,
The Laws of the Twelve Tables, that fifteenth,—
"Romulus" likewise rolls out round and large.
The Julian; the Cornelian; Gracchus' Law:
So old a chime, the bells ring of themselves!
Spreti can set that going if he please,
I point you, for my part, the belfry plain,
Intent to rise from dusk, *diluculum*,
Into the Christian day shall broaden next.

First, the fit compliment to His Holiness
Happily reigning: then sustain the point—
All that was long ago declared as law
By the natural revelation, stands confirmed
By Apostle and Evangelist and Saint,—
To-wit—that Honour is man's supreme good.
Why should I baulk Saint Jerome of his phrase?
Ubi honor non est, where no honour is,

Ibi contemptus est; and where contempt,
Ibi injuria frequens; and where that,
The frequent injury, *ibi et indignatio;*
And where the indignation, *ibi quies*
Nulla: and where there is no quietude,
Why, *ibi*, there, the mind is often cast
Down from the heights where it proposed to dwell,
Mens a proposito sæpe dejicitur.
And naturally the mind is so cast down,
Since harder 't is, *quum difficilius sit,*
Iram cohibere, to coerce one's wrath,
Quam miracula facere, than work miracles,—
Saint Gregory smiles in his First Dialogue.
Whence we infer, the ingenuous soul, the man
Who makes esteem of honour and repute,
Whenever honour and repute are touched,
Arrives at term of fury and despair,
Loses all guidance from the reason-check:
As in delirium or a frenzy-fit,
Nor fury nor despair he satiates,—no,
Not even if he attain the impossible,
O'erturn the hinges of the universe

To annihilate—not whoso caused the smart
Solely, the author simply of his pain,
But the place, the memory, *vituperii*,
O' the shame and scorn: *quia*,—says Solomon,
(The Holy Spirit speaking by his mouth
In Proverbs, the sixth chapter near the end)
—Because, the zeal and fury of a man,
Zelus et furor viri, will not spare,
Non parcet, in the day of his revenge,
In die vindictæ, nor will acquiesce,
Nec acquiescet, through a person's prayers,
Cujusdam precibus,—nec suscipiet,
Nor yet take, *pro redemptione*, for
Redemption, *dona plurium*, gifts of friends,
Mere money-payment to compound for ache.
Who recognises not my client's case?
Whereto, as strangely consentaneous here,
Adduce Saint Bernard in the Epistle writ
To Robertulus, his nephew: "Too much grief,
" *Dolor quippe nimius non deliberat*,
" Does not excogitate propriety,
" *Non verecundatur*, nor knows shame at all,

" *Non consulit rationem*, nor consults
" Reason, *non dignitatis metuit*
" *Damnum*, nor dreads the loss of dignity;
" *Modum et ordinem*, order and the mode,
" *Ignorat*, it ignores:" why, trait for trait,
Was ever portrait limned so like the life?
(By Cavalier Maratta, shall I say?
I hear he 's first in reputation now.)
Yes, that of Samson in the Sacred Text:
That 's not so much the portrait as the man!
Samson in Gaza was the antetype
Of Guido at Rome: observe the Nazarite!
Blinded he was,—an easy thing to bear:
Intrepidly he took imprisonment,
Gyves, stripes and daily labour at the mill:
But when he found himself, i' the public place,
Destined to make the common people sport,
Disdain burned up with such an impetus
I' the breast of him that, all the man one fire,
Moriatur, roared he, let my soul's self die,
Anima mea, with the Philistines!
So, pulled down pillar, roof, and death and all,

Multosque plures interfecit, ay,
And many more he killed thus, *moriens*,
Dying, *quam vivus*, than in his whole life,
Occiderat, he ever killed before.
Are these things writ for no example, Sirs?
One instance more, and let me see who doubts!
Our Lord Himself, made all of mansuetude,
Sealing the sum of sufferance up, received
Opprobrium, contumely and buffeting
Without complaint: but when He found Himself
Touched in His honour never so little for once,
Then outbroke indignation pent before—
"*Honorem meum nemini dabo!*" "No,
"My honour I to nobody will give!"
And certainly the example so hath wrought,
That whosoever, at the proper worth,
Apprises worldly honour and repute,
Esteems it nobler to die honoured man
Beneath Mannaia, than live centuries
Disgraced in the eye o' the world. We find Saint Paul
No recreant to this faith delivered once:
"Far worthier were it that I died," cries he,

Expedit mihi magis mori, " than
" That anyone should make my glory void,"
Quam ut gloriam meam quis evacuet!
See, *ad Corinthienses:* whereupon
Saint Ambrose makes a comment with much fruit,
Doubtless my Judges long since laid to heart,
So I desist from bringing forward here.
(I can't quite recollect it.)

Have I proved
Satis superque, both enough and to spare,
That Revelation old and new admits
The natural man may effervesce in ire,
O'erflood earth, o'erfroth heaven with foamy rage,
At the first puncture to his self-respect?
Then, Sirs, this Christian dogma, this law-bud
Full-blown now, soon to bask the absolute flower
Of Papal doctrine in our blaze of day,—
Bethink you, shall we miss one promise-streak,
One doubtful birth of dawn crepuscular,
One dew-drop comfort to humanity,
Now that the chalice teems with noonday wine?

Yea, argue Molinists who bar revenge—
Referring just to what makes out our case!
Under old dispensation, argue they,
The doom of the adulterous wife was death,
Stoning by Moses' law. "Nay, stone her not,
"Put her away!" next legislates our Lord;
And last of all, "Nor yet divorce a wife!"
Ordains the Church, "she typifies ourself,
The Bride no fault shall cause to fall from Christ."
Then, as no jot nor tittle of the Law
Has passed away—which who presumes to doubt?
As not one word of Christ is rendered vain—
Which, could it be though heaven and earth should pass?
—Where do I find my proper punishment
For my adulterous wife, I humbly ask
Of my infallible Pope,—who now remits
Even the divorce allowed by Christ in lieu
Of lapidation Moses licensed me?
The Gospel checks the Law which throws the stone,
The Church tears the divorce-bill Gospel grants:
Shall wives sin and enjoy impunity?
What profits me the fulness of the days,

The final dispensation, I demand,
Unless Law, Gospel and the Church subjoin
" But who hath barred thee primitive revenge,
" Which, like fire damped and dammed up, burns more fierce?
" Use thou thy natural privilege of man,
" Else wert thou found like those old ingrate Jews,
" Despite the manna-banquet on the board,
" A-longing after melons, cucumbers,
" And such like trash of Egypt left behind!"

(There was one melon had improved our soup:
But did not Cinoncino need the rind
To make a boat with? So I seem to think.)

Law, Gospel and the Church—from these we leap
To the very last revealment, easy rule
Befitting the well-born and thorough-bred
O' the happy day we live in, not the dark
O' the early rude and acorn-eating race.
" Behold," quoth James, " we bridle in a horse
" And turn his body as we would thereby!"

Yea, but we change the bit to suit the growth,
And rasp our colt's jaw with a rugged spike
We hasten to remit our managed steed
Who wheels round at persuasion of a touch.
Civilization bows to decency,
The acknowledged use and wont: 't is manners,—mild
But yet imperative law,—which make the man.
Thus do we pay the proper compliment
To rank, and that society of Rome,
Hath so obliged us by its interest,
Taken our client's part instinctively,
As unaware defending its own cause.
What *dictum* doth Society lay down
I' the case of one who hath a faithless wife?
Wherewithal should the husband cleanse his way?
Be patient and forgive? Oh, language fails,—
Shrinks from depicturing his turpitude!
For if wronged husband raise not hue and cry,
Quod si maritus de adulterio non
Conquereretur, he 's presumed a—foh!
Presumitur leno: so, complain he must.
But how complain? At your tribunal, lords?

Far weightier challenge suits your sense, I wot!
You sit not to have gentlemen propose
Questions gentility can itself discuss.
Did not you prove that to our brother Paul?
The Abate, *quum judicialiter*
Prosequeretur, when he tried the law,
Guidonis causam, in Count Guido's case,
Accidit ipsi, this befell himself,
Quod risum moverit et cachinnos, that
He moved to mirth and cachinnation, all
Or nearly all, *fere in omnibus*
Etiam sensatis et cordatis, men
Strong-sensed, sound-hearted, nay, the very Court,
Ipsismet in judicibus, I might add,
Non tamen dicam. In a cause like this,
So multiplied were reasons *pro* and *con*,
Delicate, intertwisted and obscure,
That Law refused loan of a finger-tip
To unravel, re-adjust the hopeless twine,
While, half-a-dozen steps outside Law's seat,
There stood a foolish trifler with a tool
A-dangle to no purpose by his side,

Had clearly cut the embroilment in a trice.
Asserunt enim unanimiter
Doctores, for the Doctors all assert,
That husbands, *quod mariti*, must be held
Viles, cornuti reputantur, vile,
Fronts branching forth a florid infamy,
Si propriis manibus, if with their own hands,
Non sumunt, they fail straightway take revenge,
Vindictam, but expect the deed be done
By the Court—*expectant illam fieri*
Per judices, qui summopere rident, which
Gives an enormous guffaw for reply,
Et cachinnantur. For he ran away,
Deliquit enim, just that he might 'scape
The censure of both counsellors and crowd,
Ut vulgi et Doctorum evitaret
Censuram, and lest so he superadd
To loss of honour ignominy too,
Et sic ne istam quoque ignominiam
Amisso honori superadderet.
My lords, my lords, the inconsiderate step
Was—we referred ourselves to law at all!

Twit me not with, "Law else had punished you!"
Each punishment of the extra-legal step,
To which the high-born preferably revert,
Is ever for some oversight, some slip
I' the taking vengeance, not for vengeance' self.
A good thing, done unhandsomely, turns ill;
And never yet lacked ill the law's rebuke.
For pregnant instance, let us contemplate
The luck of Leonardus,—see at large
Of Sicily's Decisions sixty-first.
This Leonard finds his wife is false: what then?
He makes her own son snare her, and entice
Out of the town walls to a private walk,
Wherein he slays her with commodity.
They find her body half-devoured by dogs:
Leonard is tried, convicted, punished, sent
To labour in the galleys seven years long:
Why? For the murder? Nay, but for the mode!
Malus modus occidendi, ruled the Court,
An ugly mode of killing, nothing more!
Another fructuous sample,—see "*De Re*
"*Criminali*," in Matthæus' divine piece.

Another husband, in no better plight,
Simulates absence, thereby tempts his wife ;
On whom he falls, out of sly ambuscade,
Backed by a brother of his, and both of them
Armed to the teeth with arms that law had blamed.
Nimis dolose, overwilily,
Fuisse operatum, did they work,
Pronounced the law : had all been fairly done
Law had not found him worthy, as she did,
Of four years' exile. Why cite more? Enough
Is good as a feast—(unless a birthday-feast
For one's Cinuccio) so, we finish here.
My lords, we rather need defend ourselves
Inasmuch as, for a twinkling of an eye,
We hesitatingly appealed to law,—
Than need deny that, on mature advice,
We blushingly bethought us, bade revenge
Back to its simple proper private way
Of decent self-dealt gentlemanly death.
Judges, here is the law, and here beside,
The testimony! Look to it!

Pause and breathe!

So far is only too plain; we must watch:
Bottini will scarce hazard an attack
Here: let 's anticipate the fellow's play,
And guard the weaker places—warily ask,
What if considerations of a sort,
Reasons of a kind, arise from out the strange
Peculiar unforeseen new circumstance
Of this our (candour owns) abnormal act,
To bar the right of us revenging so?
" Impunity were otherwise your meed:
" Go slay your wife and welcome,"—may be urged,—
" But why the innocent old couple slay,
" Pietro, Violante? You may do enough,
" Not too much, not exceed the golden mean:
" Neither brute-beast nor Pagan, Gentile, Jew,
" Nor Christian, no nor votarist of the mode,
" Was justified to push revenge so far!"

No, indeed? Why, thou very sciolist!
The actual wrong, Pompilia seemed to do,
Was virtual wrong done by the parents here—
Imposing her upon us as their child—

Themselves allow: then, her fault was their fault,
Her punishment be theirs accordingly!
But wait a little, sneak not off so soon!
Was this cheat solely harm to Guido, pray?
The precious couple you call innocent,—
Why, they were felons that law failed to clutch,
Qui ut fraudarent, who that they might rob,
Legitime vocatos, folks law called,
Ad fidei commissum, true heirs to the Trust,
Partum supposuerunt, feigned this birth,
Immemores reos factos esse, blind
To the fact that, guilty, they incurred thereby,
Ultimi supplicii, hanging or what's worse.
Do you blame us that we turn law's instruments,
Not mere self-seekers,—mind the public weal,
Nor make the private good our sole concern?
That having—shall I say—secured a thief,
Not simply we recover from his pouch
The stolen article our property,
But also pounce upon our neighbour's purse
We opportunely find reposing there,
And do him justice while we right ourselves?

He owes us, for our part, a drubbing say,
But owes our neighbour just a dancé i' the air
Under the gallows: so, we throttle him.
That neighbour 's Law, that couple are the Thief,
We are the over ready to help Law—
Zeal of her house hath eaten us up: for which,
Can it be, Law intends to eat up us,
Crudum Priamum, devour poor Priam raw,
('T was Jupiter's own joke) with babes to boot,
Priamique pisinnos, in Homeric phrase?
Shame!——and so ends the period prettily.

But even,—prove the pair not culpable,
Free as unborn babe from connivance at,
Participation in, their daughter's fault:
Ours the mistake. Is that a rare event?
Non semel, it is anything but rare,
In contingentia facti, that by chance,
Impunes evaserunt, go scot-free,
Qui, such well-meaning people as ourselves,
Justo dolore moti, who aggrieved
With cause, *apposuerunt manus*, lay

Rough hands, *in innocentes*, on wrong heads.
Cite we an illustrative case in point:
Mulier Smirnea quædam, good my lords,
A gentlewoman lived in Smyrna once,
Virum et filium ex eo conceptum, who
Both husband and her son begot by him,
Killed, *interfecerat, ex quo*, because,
Vir filium suum perdiderat, her spouse
Had been beforehand with her, killed her son,
Matrimonii primi, of a previous bed.
Deinde accusata, then accused,
Apud Dolabellam, before him that sat
Proconsul, *nec duabus cædibus*
Contaminatam liberare, nor
To liberate a woman doubly-dyed
With murder, *voluit*, made he up his mind,
Nec condemnare, nor to doom to death,
Justo dolore impulsam, one impelled
By just grief, *sed remisit*, but sent her up
Ad Areopagum, to the Hill of Mars,
Sapientissimorum judicum
Cœtum, to that assembly of the sage

Paralleled only by my judges here ;
Ubi, cognito de causa, where, the cause
Well weighed, *responsum est*, they gave reply,
Ut ipsa et accusator, that both sides
O' the suit, *redirent*, should come back again,
Post centum annos, after a hundred years,
For judgment ; *et sic*, by which sage decree,
Duplici parricidio rea, one
Convicted of a double parricide,
Quamvïs etiam innocentem, though in truth
Out of the pair, one innocent at least
She, *occidisset*, plainly had put to death,
Undequaque, yet she altogether 'scaped,
Evasit impunis. See the case at length
In Valerius, fittingly styled *Maximus*,
That eighth book of his Memorable Facts.
Nor Cyriacus cites beside the mark :
Similiter uxor quæ mandaverat,
Just so, a lady who had taken care,
Homicidium viri, that her lord be killed,
Ex denegatione debiti,
For denegation of a certain debt,

Matrimonialis, he was loth to pay,
Fuit pecuniaria mulcta, was
Amerced in a pecuniary mulct,
Punita, et ad pœnam, and to pains,
Temporalem, for a certain space of time,
In monasterio, in a convent.

(Ay,
In monasterio! How he manages,
In with the ablative, the accusative!
I had hoped to have hitched the villain into verse
For a gift, this very day, a complete list
O' the prepositions each with proper case,
Telling a story, long was in my head.
What prepositions take the accusative?
Ad to or at—*who saw the cat?*—down to
Ob, for, because of, *keep her claws off!* Ah,
Law in a man takes the whole liberty!
The muse is fettered: just as Ovid found!)

And now, sea widens and the coast is clear.
What of the dubious act you bade excuse?

Surely things brighten, brighten, till at length
Remains—so far from act that needs defence—
Apology to make for act delayed
One minute, let alone eight mortal months
Of hesitation! "Why procrastinate?"
(Out with it my Bottinius, ease thyself!)
" Right, promptly done, is twice right: right delayed
" Turns wrong. We grant you should have killed your wife,
" But killed o' the moment, at the meeting her
" In company with the priest: then did the tongue
" O' the Brazen Head give licence, 'Time is now!'
" Wait to make mind up? 'Time is past' it peals.
" Friend, you are competent to mastery
" O' the passions that confessedly explain
" An outbreak: you allow an interval,
" And then break out as if time's clock still clanged.
" You have forfeited your chance, and flat you fall
" Into the commonplace category
" Of men bound to go softly all their days,
" Obeying law."

Now, which way make response?
What was the answer Guido gave, himself?
—That so to argue came of ignorance
How honour bears a wound: "For, wound," said he,
" My body, and the smart soon mends and ends:
" While, wound my soul where honour sits and rules,
" Longer the sufferance, stronger grows the pain,
" Being *ex incontinenti*, fresh as first."
But try another tack, urge common sense
By way of contrast: say—Too true, my lords!
We did demur, awhile did hesitate:
Since husband sure should let a scruple speak
Ere he slay wife,—for his own safety, lords!
Carpers abound in this misjudging world:
Moreover, there 's a nicety in law
That seems to justify them should they carp.
Suppose the source of injury a son,—
Father may slay such son yet run no risk:
Why graced with such a privilege? Because
A father so incensed with his own child,
Or must have reason, or believe he has:
Quia semper, seeing that in such event,

Presumitur, the law is bound suppose,
Quod capiat pater, that the sire must take,
Bonum consilium pro filio,
The best course as to what befits his boy,
Through instinct, *ex instinctu*, of mere love,
Amoris, and, *paterni*, fatherhood;
Quam confidentiam, which confidence,
Non habet, law declines to entertain,
De viro, of the husband: where finds he
An instinct that compels him love his wife?
Rather is he presumably her foe.
So, let him ponder long in this bad world
Ere do the simplest act of justice.

But
Again—and here we brush Bottini's breast—
Object you, "See the danger of delay!
"Suppose a man murdered my friend last month:
"Had I come up and killed him for his pains
"In rage, I had done right, allows the law:
"I meet him now and kill him in cold blood,
"I do wrong, equally allows the law:

" Wherein do actions differ, yours and mine?"
In plenitudine intellectus es?
Hast thy wits, Fisc? To take such slayer's life,
Returns it life to thy slain friend at all?
Had he stolen ring instead of stabbing friend,—
To-day, to-morrow or next century,
Meeting the thief, thy ring upon his thumb,
Thou justifiably hadst wrung it thence:
So, couldst thou wrench thy friend's life back again,
Though prisoned in the bosom of his foe,
Why, law would look complacent on thy wrath.
Our case is, that the thing we lost, we found:
The honour, we were robbed of eight months since,
Being recoverable at any day
By death of the delinquent. Go thy ways!
Ere thou hast learned law, will be much to do,
As said the gaby while he shod the goose.

Nay, if you urge me, interval was none!
From the inn to the villa—blank or else a bar
Of adverse and contrarious incident
Solid between us and our just revenge!

What with the priest who flourishes his blade,
The wife who like a fury flings at us,
The crowd—and then the capture, the appeal
To Rome, the journey there, the journey thence,
The shelter at the House of Convertites,
The visits to the Villa, and so forth,
Where was one minute left us all this while
To put in execution that revenge
We planned o' the instant?—as it were, plumped down
O' the spot, some eight months since, which round sound egg,
Rome, more propitious than our nest, should hatch! 1070
Object not, "You reached Rome on Christmas-eve,
"And, despite liberty to act at once,
"Waited a whole and indecorous week!"
Hath so the Molinism, the canker, lords,
Eaten to the bone? Is no religion left? 1075
No care for aught held holy by the Church?
What, would you have us skip and miss those Feasts
O' the Natal Time, must we go prosecute
Secular business on a sacred day?
Should not the merest charity expect, 1080
Setting our poor concerns aside for once,

We hurried to the song matutinal
I' the Sistine, and pressed forward for the Mass
The Cardinal that 's Camerlengo chaunts,
Then rushed on to the blessing of the Hat
And Rapier, which the Pope sends to what prince
Has done most detriment to the Infidel—
And thereby whetted courage if 't were blunt?
Meantime, allow we kept the house a week,
Suppose not we were idle in our mew!
Picture us raging here and raving there—
" ' Money?' I need none. 'Friends?' The word is null.
" Restore the white was on that shield of mine
" Borne at " . . wherever might be shield to bear.
" I see my grandsire, he who fought so well
" At " . . here find out and put in time and place,
Or else invent the fight his grandsire fought:
" I see this! I see that!"

(See nothing else,
Or I shall scarce see lamb's fry in an hour!
What to the uncle, as I bid advance
The smoking dish? " Fry suits a tender tooth!

" Behoves we care a little for our kin—
" You, Sir,—who care so much for cousinship
" As come to your poor loving nephew's feast!"
He has the reversion of a long lease yet—
Land to bequeath! He loves lamb's fry, I know!)

Here fall to be considered those same six
Qualities; what Bottini needs must call
So many aggravations of our crime,
Parasite-growth upon mere murder's back.
We summarily might dispose of such
By some off-hand and jaunty fling, some skit—
" So, since there 's proved no crime to aggravate,
" A fico for your aggravations, Fisc!"
No,—handle mischief rather,—play with spells
Were meant to raise a spirit, and laugh the while
We show that did he rise we are his match!
Therefore, first aggravation: we made up—
Over and above our simple murderous selves—
A regular assemblage of armed men,
Coadunatio armatorum,—ay,
Unluckily it was the very judge

Who sits in judgment on our cause to-day
That passed the law as Governor of Rome :
" Four men armed,"—though for lawful purpose, mark !
Much more for an acknowledged crime,—" shall die."
We five were armed to the teeth, meant murder too ?
Why, that 's the very point that saves us, Fisc !
Let me instruct you. Crime nor done nor meant,—
You punish still who arm and congregate :
For why have used bad means to a good end ?
Crime being meant not done,—you punish still
The means to crime, whereon you haply pounce,
Though accident have baulked you of their end.
But crime not only compassed but complete,
Meant and done too ? Why, since you have the end,
Be that your sole concern, nor mind those means
No longer to the purpose ! Murdered we ?
(—Which, that our luck was in the present case,
Quod contigisse in præsenti casu,
Is palpable, *manibus palpatum est*—)
Make murder out against us, nothing less !
Of many crimes committed with a view
To one main crime, Law overlooks the less,

Intent upon the large. Suppose a man
Having in view commission of a theft,
Climbs the town-wall: 't is for the theft he hangs,
In case he stands convicted of such theft:
Law remits whipping, due to who clomb wall
Through bravery or wantonness alone,
Just to dislodge a daw's nest or plant flag.
So I interpret you the manly mind
Of him the Judge shall judge both you and me,—
Our Governor, who, being no Fisc, my Fisc,
Cannot have blundered on ineptitude!

Next aggravation,—that the arms themselves
Were specially of such forbidden sort
Through shape or length or breadth, as, prompt, Law plucks
From single hand of solitary man,
Making him pay the carriage with his life:
Delatio armorum, arms against the rule,
Contra formam constitutionis, of
Pope Alexander's blessed memory.
Such is the poignard with the double prong,

Horn-like, when tines make bold the antlered buck,
And made of brittle glass—wherewith to stab
And break off short and so let fragment stick
Fast in the flesh to baffle surgery:
Such being the Genoese blade with hooked edge
That did us service at the villa here.
Sed parcat mihi tam eximius vir,
But,—let so rare a personage forgive,—
Fisc, thy objection is a foppery!
Thy charge runs that we killed three innocents:
Killed, dost see? Then, if killed, what matter how? —
By stick or stone, by sword or dagger, tool
Long or tool short, round or triangular—
Poor slain folks find small comfort in the choice!
Means to an end, means to an end, my Fisc!
Nature cries out "Take the first arms you find!"
Furor ministrat arma: where 's a stone?
Unde mî lapidem, where darts for me?
Unde sagittas? But subdue the bard
And rationalize a little. Eight months since,
Had we, or had we not, incurred your blame
For letting 'scape unpunished this bad pair?

I think I proved that in last paragraph !
Why did we so ? Because our courage failed.
Wherefore ? Through lack of arms to fight the foe :
We had no arms or merely lawful ones,
An unimportant sword and blunderbuss,
Against a foe, pollent in potency,
The *amasius*, and our vixen of a wife.
Well then, how culpably do we gird loin
And once more undertake the high emprise,
Unless we load ourselves this second time
With handsome superfluity of arms,
Since better is "too much" than "not enough,"
And "*plus non vitiat*," too much does no harm,
Except in mathematics, sages say.
Gather instruction from the parable !
At first we are advised—"A lad hath here
"Seven barley loaves and two small fishes : what
"Is that among so many ?" Aptly asked :
But put that question twice and, quite as apt
The answer is "Fragments, twelve baskets full !"

And, while we speak of superabundance, fling

We word by the way to fools who cast their flout
On Guido—" Punishment were pardoned him,
" But here the punishment exceeds offence:
" He might be just, but he was cruel too! "
Why, grant there seems a kind of cruelty
In downright stabbing people he could maim,
(If so you stigmatise the stern and strict)
Still, Guido meant no cruelty—may plead
Transgression of his mandate, over-zeal
O' the part of his companions: all he craved
Was, they should fray the faces of the folk,
Merely disfigure, nowise make them die.
Solummodo fassus est, he owns no more,
Dedisse mandatum, than that he desired,
Ad sfrisiandum, *dicam*, that they hack
And hew, i' the customary phrase, his wife,
Uxorem tantum, and no harm beside.
If his instructions then be misconceived,
Nay, disobeyed, impute you blame to him?
Cite me no Panicollus to the point,
As adverse! Oh, I quite expect his case—
How certain noble youths of Sicily

Having good reason to mistrust their wives,
Killed them and were absolved in consequence:
While others who had gone beyond the need
By mutilation of each paramour—
As Galba in the Horatian satire grieved
—These were condemned to the galleys, cast for guilt
Exceeding simple murder of a wife.
But why? Because of ugliness, and not
Cruelty, in the said revenge, I trow!
Ex causa abscissionis partium;
Qui nempe id facientes reputantur
Naturæ inimici, man revolts
Against them as the natural enemy.
Pray, grant to one who meant to slit the nose
And slash the cheek and slur the mouth, at most,
A somewhat more humane award than these
Obtained, these natural enemies of man!
Objectum funditus corruit, flat you fall,
My Fisc! I waste no kick on you, but pass.

Third aggravation: that our act was done—
Not in the public street, where safety lies,

Not in the bye-place, caution may avoid,
Wood, cavern, desert, spots contrived for crime,—
But in the very house, home, nook and nest,
O' the victims, murdered in their dwelling-place,
In domo ac habitatione propria,
Where all presumably is peace and joy.
The spider, crime, pronounce we twice a pest
When, creeping from congenial cottage, she
Taketh hold with her hands, to horrify
His household more, i' the palace of the king.
All three were housed and safe and confident.
Moreover, the permission that our wife
Should have at length *domum pro carcere*,
Her own abode in place of prison—why,
We ourselves granted, by our other self
And proxy Paolo: did we make such grant,
Meaning a lure?—elude the vigilance
O' the jailor, lead her to commodious death,
While we ostensibly relented?

Ay,

Just so did we, nor otherwise, my Fisc!
Is vengeance lawful? We demand our right,

But find it will be questioned or refused
By jailor, turnkey, hangdog,—what know we?
Pray, how is it we should conduct ourselves?
To gain our private right—break public peace,
Do you bid us?—trouble order with our broils?
Endanger . . shall I shrink to own . . ourselves?—
Who want no broken head nor bloody nose
(While busied slitting noses, breaking heads)
From the first tipstaff that may interfere!
Nam quicquid sit, for howsoever it be,
An de consensu nostro, if with leave
Or not, *a monasterio*, from the nuns,
Educta esset, she had been led forth,
Potuimus id dissimulare, we
May well have granted leave in pure pretence,
Ut aditum habere, that thereby
An entry we might compass, a free move
Potuissemus, to her easy death,
Ad eam occidendam. Privacy
O' the hearth, and sanctitude of home, say you?
Shall we give man's abode more privilege
Than God's?—for in the churches where He dwells,

In quibus assistit Regum Rex, by means
Of His essence, *per essentiam*, all the same,
Et nihilominus, therein, *in eis*,
Ex justa via delinquens, whoso dares
To take a liberty on ground enough,
Is pardoned, *excusatur:* that 's our case—
Delinquent through befitting cause. You hold,
To punish a false wife in her own house
Is graver than, what happens every day,
To hale a debtor from his hiding-place
In church protected by the Sacrament?
To this conclusion have I brought my Fisc?
Foxes have holes, and fowls o' the air their nests;
Praise you the impiety that follows, Fisc?
Shall false wife yet have where to lay her head?
" *Contra Fiscum definitum est!*" He 's done!
" *Surge et scribe*," make a note of it!
—If I may dally with Aquinas' word.

Or in the death-throe does he mutter still,
Fourth aggravation, that we changed our garb,
And rusticized ourselves with uncouth hat,

Rough vest and goatskin wrappage ; murdered thus
Mutatione vestium, in disguise,
Whereby mere murder got complexed with wile,
Turned *homicidium ex insidiis ?* Fisc,
How often must I round thee in the ears—
All means are lawful to a lawful end ?
Concede he had the right to kill his wife :
The Count indulged in a travesty ; why ?
De illa ut vindictam sumeret,
That on her he might lawful vengeance take,
Commodius, with more ease, *et tutius*,
And safelier : wants he warrant for the step ?
Read to thy profit how the Apostle once
For ease and safety, when Damascus raged,
Was let down in a basket by the wall,
To 'scape the malice of the governor
(Another sort of Governor boasts Rome !)
—Many are of opinion,—covered close,
Concealed with—what except that very cloak
He left behind at Troas afterward ?
I shall not add a syllable : Molinists may !

Well, have we more to manage? Ay, indeed!
Fifth aggravation, that our wife reposed
Sub potestate judicis, beneath
Protection of the judge,—her house was styled
A prison, and his power became its guard
In lieu of wall and gate and bolt and bar.
This is a tough point, shrewd, redoubtable:
Because we have to supplicate the judge
Shall overlook wrong done the judgment-seat.
Now, I might suffer my own nose be pulled,
As man—but then as father . . if the Fisc
Touched one hair of my boy who held my hand
In confidence he could not come to harm
Crossing the Corso, at my own desire,
Going to see those bodies in the church—
What would you say to that, Don Hyacinth?
This is the sole and single knotty point:
For, bid Tommati blink his interest,
You laud his magnanimity the while:
But baulk Tommati's office,—he talks big!
" My predecessors in the place,—those sons
" O' the prophets that may hope succeed me here,—

" Shall I diminish their prerogative?
" Count Guido Franceschini's honour!—well,
" Has the Governor of Rome none?"

You perceive,
The cards are all against us. Make a push,
Kick over table, as shrewd gamesters do!
We, do you say, encroach upon the rights,
Deny the omnipotence o' the Judge forsooth?
We, who have only been from first to last
Intending that his purpose should prevail,
Nay, more, at times, anticipating it
At risk of his rebuke?

But wait awhile!
Cannot we lump this with the sixth and last
Of the aggravations—that the Majesty
O' the Sovereign here received a wound? to-wit,
Læsa Majestas, since our violence
Was out of envy to the course of law,
In odium litis? We cut short thereby
Three pending suits, promoted by ourselves

I' the main,—which worsens crime, *accedit ad Exasperationem criminis !*

Yes, here the eruptive wrath with full effect !
How, did not indignation chain my tongue,
Could I repel this last, worst charge of all !
(There is a porcupine to barbacue ;
Gigia can jug a rabbit well enough,
With sour-sweet sauce and pine-pips ; but, good Lord,
Suppose the devil instigate the wench
To stew, not roast him ? Stew my porcupine ?
If she does, I know where his quills shall stick !
Come, I must go myself and see to things :
I cannot stay much longer stewing here.)
Our stomach . . I mean, our soul is stirred within,
And we want words. We wounded Majesty ?
Fall under such a censure, we ?—who yearned
So much that Majesty dispel the cloud
And shine on us with healing on her wings,
That we prayed Pope *Majestas'* very self
To anticipate a little the tardy pack,

Bell us forth deep the authoritative bay
Should start the beagles into sudden yelp
Unisonous,—and, Gospel leading Law,
Grant there assemble in our own behoot
A Congregation, a particular Court,
A few picked friends of quality and place,
To hear the several matters in dispute,
Causes big, little and indifferent,
Bred of our marriage like a mushroom-growth,
All at once (can one brush off such too soon?)
And so with laudable dispatch decide
Whether we, in the main (to sink detail)
Were one the Pope should hold fast or let go.
"What, take the credit from the Law?" you ask?
Indeed, we did! Law ducks to Gospel here:
Why should Law gain the glory and pronounce
A judgment shall immortalize the Pope?
Yes: our self-abnegating policy
Was Joab's—we would rouse our David's sloth,
Bid him encamp against a city, sack
A place whereto ourselves had long laid siege,
Lest, taking it at last, it take our name

Nor be styled *Innocentinopolis.*
But no! The modesty was in alarm,
The temperance refused to interfere,
Returned us our petition with the word
" *Ad judices suos*," " Leave him to his Judge!"
As who should say " Why trouble my repose?
" Why consult Peter in a simple case,
" Peter's wife's sister in her fever-fit
" Might solve as readily as the Apostle's self?
" Are my Tribunals posed by aught so plain?
" Hath not my Court a conscience? It is of age,
" Ask it!"

We do ask,—but, inspire reply
To the Court thou bidst me ask, as I have asked—
Oh thou, who vigilantly dost attend
To even the few, the ineffectual words
Which rise from this our low and mundane sphere
Up to thy region out of smoke and noise,
Seeking corroboration from thy nod
Who art all justice—which means mercy too,
In a low noisy smoky world like ours

Where Adam's sin made peccable his seed!
We venerate the father of the flock,
Whose last faint sands of life, the frittered gold,
Fall noiselessly, yet all too fast, o' the cone
And tapering heap of those collected years,—
Never have these been hurried in their flow,
Though justice fain would jog reluctant arm,
In eagerness to take the forfeiture
Of guilty life: much less shall mercy sue
In vain that thou let innocence survive,
Precipitate no minim of the mass
O' the all-so precious moments of thy life,
By pushing Guido into death and doom!

(Our Cardinal engages to go read
The Pope my speech, and point its beauties out.
They say, the Pope has one half-hour, in twelve,
Of something like a moderate return
Of the intellectuals,—never much to lose!—
If I adroitly plant this passage there,
The Fisc will find himself forestalled, I think,
Though he stand, beat till the old ear-drum break!

—Ah, boy of my own bowels, Hyacinth,
Wilt ever catch the knack, requite the pains
Of poor papa, become proficient too
I' the how and why and when, the time to laugh,
The time to weep, the time, again, to pray,
And all the times prescribed by Holy Writ?
Well, well, we fathers can but care, but cast
Our bread upon the waters!)
In a word,
These secondary charges go to ground,
Since secondary, and superfluous,—motes
Quite from the main point: we did all and some,
Little and much, adjunct and principal,
Causa honoris. Is there such a cause
As the sake of honour? By that sole test try
Our action, nor demand if more or less,
Because of the action's mode, we merit blame
Or may-be deserve praise! The Court decides.
Is the end lawful? It allows the means:
What we may do, we may with safety do,
And what means "safety" we ourselves must judge.
Put case a person wrongs me past dispute:

If my legitimate vengeance be a blow,
Mistrusting my bare arm can deal that blow,
I claim co-operation of a stick;
Doubtful if stick be tough, I crave a sword;
Diffident of ability in fence,
I fee a friend, a swordsman to assist:
Take one—he may be coward, fool or knave:
Why not take fifty?—and if these exceed
I' the due degree of drubbing, whom accuse
But the first author of the aforesaid wrong
Who put poor me to such a world of pains?
Surgery would have just excised a wart;
The patient made such pother, struggled so
That the sharp instrument sliced nose and all.
Taunt us not that our friends performed for pay!
Ourselves, the simple honour's sake sufficed:
But country clowns want dirt they comprehend,
The piece of gold! Our reasons, which suffice
Ourselves, be ours alone; our piece of gold
Be, to the rustic, reason he approves!
We must translate our motives like our speech,
Into the lower phrase that suits the sense

O' the limitedly apprehensive. Let
Each level have its language ! Heaven speaks first
To the angel, then the angel tames the word
Down to the ear of Tobit : he, in turn,
Diminishes the message to his dog,
And finally that dog finds how the flea
(Which else, importunate, might check his speed)
Shall learn its hunger must have holiday,
By application of his tongue or paw :
So many varied sorts of language here,
Each following each with pace to match the step,
Haud passibus æquis !

Talking of which flea,
Reminds me I must put in special word
For the poor humble following,—the four friends,
Sicarii, our assassins caught and caged.
Ourselves are safe in your approval now :
Yet must we care for our companions, plead
The cause o' the poor, the friends (of old-world faith)
Who lie in tribulation for our sake.
Pauperum Procurator is my style :

I stand forth as the poor man's advocate:
And when we treat of what concerns the poor,
Et cum agatur de pauperibus,
In bondage, *carceratis*, for their sake,
In eorum causis, natural piety,
Pietas, ever ought to win the day,
Triumphare debet, quia ipsi sunt,
Because those very paupers constitute,
Thesaurus Christi, all the wealth of Christ.
Nevertheless I shall not hold you long
With multiplicity of proofs, nor burn
Candle at noon-tide, clarify the clear.
There beams a case refulgent from our books—
Castrensis, Butringarius, everywhere
I find it burn to dissipate the dark.
'T is this: a husband had a friend, which friend
Seemed to him over-friendly with his wife
In thought and purpose,—I pretend no more.
To justify suspicion or dispel,
He bids his wife make show of giving heed,
Semblance of sympathy—propose, in fine,
A secret meeting in a private place.

The friend, enticed thus, finds an ambuscade,
To-wit, the husband posted with a pack
Of other friends, who fall upon the first
And beat his love and life out both at once.
These friends were brought to question for their help;
Law ruled "The husband being in the right,
"Who helped him in the right can scarce be wrong"—
Opinio, an opinion every way,
Multum tenenda cordi, heart should hold!
When the inferiors follow as befits
The lead o' the principal, they change their name,
And, *non dicuntur*, are no longer called
His mandatories, *mandatorii*,
But helpmates, *sed auxiliatores;* since
To that degree does honour' sake lend aid,
Adeo honoris causa est efficax,
That not alone, *non solum*, does it pour
Itself out, *se diffundat*, on mere friends,
We bring to do our bidding of this sort,
In mandatorios simplices, but sucks
Along with it in wide and generous whirl,
Sed etiam assassinii qualitate

Qualificatos, people qualified
By the quality of assassination's self,
Dare I make use of such neologism,
Ut utar verbo.

Haste we to conclude :
Of the other points that favour, leave some few
For Spreti ; such as the delinquents' youth :
One of them falls short, by some months, of age
Fit to be managed by the gallows ; two
May plead exemption from our law's award,
Being foreigners, subjects of the Granduke—
I spare that bone to Spreti, and reserve
Myself the jucier breast of argument—
Flinging the breast-blade i' the face o' the Fisc,
Who furnished me the tid-bit : he must needs
Play off his privilege and rack the clowns,—
And they, at instance of the rack, confess
All four unanimously made resolve,—
The night o' the murder, in brief minute snatched
Behind the back of Guido as he fled,—
That, since he had not kept his promise, paid

The money for the murder on the spot,
So, reaching home again, might please ignore
The pact or pay them in improper coin,—
They one and all resolved, these hopeful friends,
'T were best inaugurate the morrow's light,
Nature recruited with her due repose,
By killing Guido as he lay asleep
Pillowed on wallet which contained their fee.

I thank the Fisc for knowledge of this fact:
What fact could hope to make more manifest
Their rectitude, Guido's integrity?
For who fails recognise the touching truth
That these poor rustics bore no envy, hate,
Malice nor yet uncharitableness
Against the people they had put to death?
In them, did such an act reward itself?
All done was to deserve the simple pay,
Obtain the bread clowns earn by sweat of brow,
And missing which, they missed of everything—
Hence claimed pay, even at expense of life
To their own lord, so little warped (admire!)

By prepossession, such the absolute
Instinct of equity in rustic souls!
Whereas our Count, the cultivated mind,
He, wholly rapt in his serene regard
Of honour, he contemplating the sun,
Who hardly marks if taper blink below,
He, dreaming of no argument for death
Except a vengeance worthy noble hearts,—
Dared not so desecrate the deed, forsooth,
Vulgarise vengeance, as defray its cost
By money dug from out the dirty earth,
Irritant mere, in Ovid's phrase, to ill.
What though he lured base hinds by lucre's hope,—
The only motive they could masticate,
Milk for babes, not strong meat which men require?
The deed done, those coarse hands were soiled enough,
He spared them the pollution of the pay.
So much for the allegement, thine, my Fisc,
Quo nil absurdius, than which nought more mad,
Excogitari potest, may be squeezed
From out the cogitative brain of thee!

And now, thou excellent the Governor!
(Push to the peroration) *cæterum*
Enixe supplico, I strive in prayer,
Ut dominis meis, that unto the Court,
Benigna fronte, with a gracious brow,
Et oculis serenis, and mild eyes,
Perpendere placeat, it may please them weigh,
Quod dominus Guido, that our noble Count,
Occidit, did the killing in dispute,
Ut ejus honor tumulatus, that
The honour of him buried fathom-deep
In infamy, *in infamia*, might arise,
Resurgeret, as ghost breaks sepulchre!
Occidit, for he killed, *uxorem*, wife,
Quia illi fuit, since she was to him,
Opprobrio, a disgrace and nothing more!
Et genitores, killed her parents too,
Qui, who, *postposita verecundia*,
Having thrown off all sort of decency,
Filiam repudiarunt, had renounced
Their daughter, *atque declarare non*
Erubuerunt, nor felt blush tinge cheek,

Declaring, *meretricis genitam*
Esse, she was the offspring of a drab,
Ut ipse dehonestaretur, just
That so himself might lose his social rank !
Cujus mentem, and which daughter's heart and soul,
They, *perverterunt*, turned from the right course,
Et ad illicitos amores non
Dumtaxat pellexerunt, and to love
Not simply did alluringly incite,
Sed vi obedientiæ, but by force
O' the duty, *filialis*, daughters owe,
Coegerunt, forced and drove her to the deed:
Occidit, I repeat he killed the clan,
Ne scilicet amplius in dedecore,
Lest peradventure longer life might trail,
Viveret, link by link his turpitude,
Invisus consanguineis, hateful so
To kith and kindred, *a nobilibus*
Notatus, shunned by men of quality,
Relictus ab amicis, left i' the lurch
By friends, *ab omnibus derisus*, turned
A common hack-block to try edge of jokes.

Occidit, and he killed them here in Rome,
In Urbe, the Eternal City, Sirs,
Nempe quæ alias spectata est,
The appropriate theatre which witnessed once,
Matronam nobilem, Lucretia's self,
Abluere pudicitiæ maculas,
Wash off the spots of her pudicity,
Sanguine proprio, with her own pure blood ;
Quæ vidit, and which city also saw,
Patrem, Virginius, *undequaque*, quite,
Impunem, with no sort of punishment,
Nor, *et non illaudatum*, lacking praise,
Sed polluentem parricidio,
Imbrue his hands with butchery, *filiæ*,
Of chaste Virginia, to avoid a rape,
Ne raperetur ad stupra ; so to heart,
Tanti illi cordi fuit, did he take,
Suspicio, the mere fancy men might have,
Honoris amittendi, of fame's loss,
Ut potius voluerit filia
Orbari, he preferred to lose his child,
Quam illa incederet, rather than she walk

The ways an, *inhonesta*, child disgraced,
Licet non sponte, though against her will.
Occidit—killed them, I reiterate—
In propria domo, in their own abode,
Ut adultera et parentes, that each wretch,
Conscii agnoscerent, might both see and say,
Nullum locum, there's no place, *nullumque esse*
Asylum, nor yet refuge of escape,
Impenetrabilem, shall serve as bar,
Honori læso, to the wounded one
In honour; *neve ibi opprobria*
Continuarentur, killed them on the spot
Moreover, dreading lest within those walls
The opprobrium peradventure be prolonged,
Et domus quæ testis fuit turpium,
And that the domicile which witnessed crime,
Esset et pœnæ, might watch punishment:
Occidit, killed, I round you in the ears,
Quia alio modo, since by other mode,
Non poterat ejus existimatio,
There was no possibility his fame,
Læsa, gashed grisly, *tam enormiter*,

Ducere cicatrices, might be healed :
Occidit ut exemplum præberet
Uxoribus, killed her, so to lesson wives
Jura conjugii, that the marriage-oath,
Esse servanda, must be kept henceforth :
Occidit denique, killed her, in a word,
Ut pro posse honestus viveret,
That he, please God, might creditably live,
Sin minus, but if fate willed otherwise,
Proprii honoris, of his outraged fame,
Offensi, by Mannaja, if you please,
Commiseranda victima caderet,
The pitiable victim he should fall !

Done ! I' the rough, i' the rough ! But done ! And, lo,
Landed and stranded lies my very speech,
My miracle, my monster of defence—
Leviathan into the nose whereof
I have put fish-hook, pierced his jaw with thorn,
And given him to my maidens for a play !
I' the rough : to-morrow I review my piece,
Tame here and there undue floridity.

It 's hard: you have to plead before these priests
And poke at them with Scripture, or you pass
For heathen and, what's worse, for ignorant
O' the quality o' the Court and what it likes
By way of illustration of the law.
To-morrow stick in this, and throw out that,
And, having first ecclesiasticized,
Regularize the whole, next emphasize,
Then latinize and lastly Cicero-ize,
Giving my Fisc his finish. There's my speech!
And where's my fry, and family and friends?
Where 's that huge Hyacinth I mean to hug
Till he cries out, "*Jam satis!* Let me breathe!"
Now, what an evening have I earned to-day!
Hail, ye true pleasures, all the rest are false!
Oh, the old mother, oh, the fattish wife!
Rogue Hyacinth shall put on paper toque,
And wrap himself around with mamma's veil
Done up to imitate papa's black robe,
(I 'm in the secret of the comedy,—
Part of the program leaked out long ago!)
And call himself the Advocate o' the Poor,

Mimic Don father that defends the Count:
And for reward shall have a small full glass
Of manly red rosolio to himself,
—Always provided that he conjugate
Bibo, I drink, correctly—nor be found
Make the *perfectum*, *bipsi*, as last year!
How the ambitious do so harden heart
As lightly hold by these home-sanctitudes,
To me is matter of bewilderment—
Bewilderment! Because ambition's range
Is nowise tethered by domestic tie:
Am I refused an outlet from my home
To the world's stage?—whereon a man should play
The man in public, vigilant for law,
Zealous for truth, a credit to his kind,
Nay,—since, employing talent so, I yield
The Lord His own again with usury,—
A satisfaction, yea, to God Himself!
Well, I have modelled me by Agur's wish,
" Remove far from me vanity and lies,
" Feed me with food convenient for me!" What
I' the world should a wise man require beyond?

Can I but coax the good fat little wife
To tell her fool of a father the mad prank
His scapegrace nephew played this time last year
At Carnival! He could not choose, I think,
But modify that inconsiderate gift
O' the cup and cover (somewhere in the will
Under the pillow, someone seems to guess)
—Correct that clause in favour of a boy
The trifle ought to grace, with name engraved,
Would look so well, produced in future years
To pledge a memory, when poor papa
Latin and law are long since laid at rest—
Hyacintho dono dedit avus! Why,
The wife should get a necklace for her pains,
The very pearls that made Violante proud,
And Pietro pawned for half their value once,—
Redeemable by somebody, *ne sit*
Marita quæ rotundioribus
Onusta mammis. . . baccis ambulet:
Her bosom shall display the big round balls,
No braver proudly borne by wedded wife!
With which Horatian promise I conclude.

Into the pigeon-hole with thee, my speech !
Off and away, first work then play, play, play !
Bottini, burn your books, you blazing ass !
Sing " Tra-la-la, for, lambkins, we must live ! "

IX.

JURIS DOCTOR JOHANNES-BAPTISTA BOTTINIUS,

FISCI ET REV. CAM. APOSTOL. ADVOCATUS.

Had I God's leave, how I would alter things!
If I might read instead of print my speech,—
Ay, and enliven speech with many a flower
Refuses obstinately blow in print,
As wildings planted in a prim parterre,—
This scurvy room were turned an immense hall;
Opposite, fifty judges in a row;
This side and that of me, for audience—Rome:
And, where yon window is, the Pope should hide—
Watch, curtained, but peep visibly enough.

A buzz of expectation! Through the crowd,
Jingling his chain and stumping with his staff,
Up comes an usher, louts him low, "The Court
"Requires the allocution of the Fisc!"
I rise, I bend, I look about me, pause
O'er the hushed multitude: I count—One, two—

Have ye seen, Judges, have ye, lights of law,—
When it may hap some painter, much in vogue
Throughout our city nutritive of arts,
Ye summon to a task shall test his worth,
And manufacture, as he knows and can,
A work may decorate a palace-wall,
Afford my lords their Holy Family,—
Hath it escaped the acumen of the Court
How such a painter sets himself to paint?
Suppose that Joseph, Mary and her Babe
A-journeying to Egypt, prove the piece:
Why, first he sedulously practiseth,
This painter,—girding loin and lighting lamp,—

On what may nourish eye, make facile hand ;
Getteth him studies (styled by draughtsmen so)
From some assistant corpse of Jew or Turk
Or, haply, Molinist, he cuts and carves,—
This Luca or this Carlo or the like.
To him the bones their inmost secret yield,
Each notch and nodule signify their use :
On him the muscles turn, in triple tier,
And pleasantly entreat the entrusted man
" Familiarize thee with our play that lifts
" Thus, and thus lowers again, leg, arm and foot ! "
—Ensuring due correctness in the nude.
Which done, is all done ? Not a whit, ye know !
He,—to art's surface rising from her depth,—
If some flax-polled soft-bearded sire be found,
May simulate a Joseph, (happy chance !)
Limneth exact each wrinkle of the brow,
Loseth no involution, cheek or chap,
Till lo, in black and white, the senior lives !
Is it a young and comely peasant-nurse
That poseth ? (be the phrase accorded me !)
Each feminine delight of florid lip,

Eyes brimming o'er and brow bowed down with love,
Marmoreal neck and bosom uberous,—
Glad on the paper in a trice they go
To help his notion of the Mother-maid :
Methinks I see it, chalk a little stumped !
Yea and her babe—that flexure of soft limbs,
That budding face imbued with dewy sleep,
Contribute each an excellence to Christ.
Nay, since he humbly lent companionship,
Even the poor ass, unpanniered and elate
Stands, perks an ear up, he a model too ;
While clouted shoon, staff, scrip and water-gourd,—
Aught may betoken travel, heat and haste,—
No jot nor tittle of these but in its turn
Ministers to perfection of the piece :
Till now, such piece before him, part by part,—
Such prelude ended,—pause our painter may,
Submit his fifty studies one by one,
And in some sort boast " I have served my lords."

But what ? And hath he painted once this while ?
Or when ye cry " Produce the thing required,

"Show us our picture shall rejoice its niche,
"Thy Journey through the Desert done in oils!"—
What, doth he fall to shuffling 'mid his sheets,
Fumbling for first this, then the other fact
Consigned to paper,—"studies," bear the term!—
And stretch a canvas, mix a pot of paste,
And fasten here a head and there a tail,
(The ass hath one, my Judges!) so dove-tail
Or, rather, ass-tail in, piece sorrily out—
By bits of reproduction of the life—
The picture, the expected Family?
I trow not! do I miss with my conceit
The mark, my lords?—not so my lords were served!
Rather your artist turns abrupt from these,
And preferably buries him and broods
(Quite away from aught vulgar and extern)
On the inner spectrum, filtered through the eye,
His brain-deposit, bred of many a drop,
E pluribus unum: and the wiser he!
For in that brain,—their fancy sees at work,
Could my lords peep indulged,—results alone,
Not processes which nourish the result,

Would they discover and appreciate,—life
Fed by digestion, not raw food itself,
No gobbets but smooth comfortable chyme
Secreted from each snapped-up crudity,—
Less distinct, part by part, but in the whole
Truer to the subject,—the main central truth
And soul o' the picture, would my Judges spy,—
Not those mere fragmentary studied facts
Which answer to the outward frame and flesh—
Not this nose, not that eyebrow, the other fact
Of man's staff, woman's stole or infant's clout,
But lo, a spirit-birth conceived of flesh,
Truth rare and real, not transcripts, fact and false.
The studies—for his pupils and himself!
The picture be for our eximious Rome
And—who knows?—satisfy its Governor,
Whose new wing to the villa he hath bought
(God give him joy of it) by Capena, soon
('T is bruited) shall be glowing with the brush
Of who hath long surpassed the Florentine,
The Urbinate and . . what if I dared add,
Even his master, yea the Cortonese,—

I mean the accomplished Ciro Ferri, Sirs!
(—Did not he die? I 'll see before I print.)

End we exordium, Phœbus plucks my ear!
Thus then, just so and no whit otherwise,
Have I,—engaged as I were Ciro's self,
To paint a parallel, a Family,
The patriarch Pietro with his wise old wife
To boot (as if one introduced Saint Anne
By bold conjecture to complete the group)
And juvenile Pompilia with her babe,
Who, seeking safety in the wilderness,
Were all surprised by Herod, while outstretched
In sleep beneath a palm-tree by a spring,
And killed—the very circumstance I paint,
Moving the pity and terror of my lords—
Exactly so have I, a month at least,
Your Fiscal, made me cognizant of facts,
Searched out, pried into, pressed the meaning forth
Of every piece of evidence in point,
How bloody Herod slew these innocents,—
Until the glad result is gained, the group

Demonstrably presented in detail,
Their slumber and his onslaught,—like as life.
Yea and, availing me of help allowed
By law, discreet provision lest my lords
Be too much troubled by effrontery,—
The rack, law plies suspected crime withal—
(Law that hath listened while the lyrist sang
"*Lene tormentum ingenio admoves*,"
Gently thou joggest by a twinge the wit,
"*Plerumque duro*," else were slow to blab !)
Through this concession my full cup runs o'er:
The guilty owns his guilt without reserve.
Therefore by part and part I clutch my case
Which, in entirety now,—momentous task,—
My lords demand, so render them I must,
Since, one poor pleading more and I have done.
But shall I ply my papers, play my proofs,
Parade my studies, fifty in a row,
As though the Court were yet in pupilage
And not the artist's ultimate appeal?
Much rather let me soar the height prescribed
And, bowing low, proffer my picture's self!

No more of proof, disproof,—such virtue was,
Such vice was never in Pompilia, now!
Far better say "Behold Pompilia!"—(for
I leave the family as unmanageable,
And stick to just one portrait, but life-size.)
Hath calumny imputed to the fair
A blemish, mole on cheek or wart on chin,
Much more, blind hidden horrors best unnamed?
Shall I descend to prove you, point by point,
Never was knock-knee known nor splay-foot found
In Phryne? (I must let the portrait go,
Content me with the model, I believe)—
—I prove this? An indignant sweep of hand,
Dash at and doing away with drapery,
And,—use your eyes, Athenians, smooth she smiles!
Or,—since my client can no longer smile,
And more appropriate instances abound,—
What is this Tale of Tarquin, how the slave
Was caught by him, preferred to Collatine?
Thou, even from thy corpse-clothes virginal,
Look'st the lie dead, Lucretia!

Thus at least

I, by the guidance of antiquity,
(Our one infallible guide) now operate,
Sure that the innocency shown is safe;
Sure, too, that, while I plead, the echoes cry
(Lend my weak voice thy trump, sonorous Fame!)
"Monstrosity the Phrynean shape shall mar,
"Lucretia's soul comport with Tarquin's lie,
"When thistles grow on vines or thorns yield figs,
"Or oblique sentence leave this judgment-seat!"

A great theme: may my strength be adequate!
For—paint Pompilia, dares my feebleness?
How did I unaware engage so much
—Find myself undertaking to produce
A faultless nature in a flawless form?
What 's here? Oh, turn aside nor dare the blaze
Of such a crown, such constellation, say,
As jewels here thy front, Humanity!
First, infancy, pellucid as a pearl;
Then, childhood—stone which, dew-drop at the first,
(An old conjecture) sucks, by dint of gaze,
Blue from the sky and turns to sapphire so:

Yet both these gems eclipsed by, last and best,
Womanliness and wifehood opaline,
Its milk-white pallor,—chastity,—suffused
With here and there a tint and hint of flame,—
Desire,—the lapidary loves to find.
Such jewels bind conspicuously thy brow,
Pompilia, infant, child, maid, woman, wife—
Crown the ideal in our earth at last!
What should a faculty like mine do here?
Close eyes, or else, the rashlier hurry hand!

Which is to say,—lose no time but begin!
Sermocinando ne declamem, Sirs,
Ultra clepsydram, as our preachers say,
Lest I exceed my hour-glass. Whereupon,
As Flaccus prompts, I dare the epic plunge—
Begin at once with marriage, up till when
Little or nothing would arrest your love,
In the easeful life o' the lady; lamb and lamb,
How do they differ? Know one, you know all
Manners of maidenhood: mere maiden she.
And since all lambs are like in more than fleece,

Prepare to find that, lamb-like, she too frisks—
O' the weaker sex, my lords, the weaker sex!
To whom, the Teian teaches us, for gift,
Not strength,—man's dower,—but beauty, nature gave,
" Beauty in lieu of spears, in lieu of shields!"
And what is beauty's sure concomitant,
Nay, intimate essential character,
But melting wiles, deliciousest deceits,
The whole redoubted armoury of love?
Therefore of vernal pranks, dishevellings
O' the hair of youth that dances April in,
And easily-imagined Hebe-slips
O'er sward which May makes over-smooth for foot—
These shall we pry into?—or wiselier wink,
Though numerous and dear they may have been?

For lo, advancing Hymen and his pomp!
Discedunt nunc amores, loves, farewell!
Maneat amor, let love, the sole, remain!
Farewell to dewiness and prime of life!
Remains the rough determined day: dance done,
To work, with plough and harrow! What comes next?

'T is Guido henceforth guides Pompilia's step,
Cries "No more friskings o'er the foodful glebe,
" Else, 'ware the whip!" Accordingly,—first crack
O' the thong,—we hear that his young wife was barred,
Cohibita fuit, from the old free life,
Vitam liberiorem ducere.
Demur we? Nowise: heifer brave the hind?
We seek not there should lapse the natural law,
The proper piety to lord and king
And husband: let the heifer bear the yoke!
Only, I crave he cast not patience off,
This hind; for deem you she endures the whip,
Nor winces at the goad, nay, restive, kicks?
What if the adversary's charge be just,
And all untowardly she pursue her way
With groan and grunt, though hind strike ne'er so hard?
If petulant remonstrance made appeal,
Unseasonable, o'erprotracted,—if
Importunate challenge taxed the public ear
When silence more decorously had served
For protestation,—if Pompilian plaint
Wrought but to aggravate Guidonian ire,—

Why, such mishaps, ungainly though they be,
Ever companion change, are incident
To altered modes and novelty of life:
The philosophic mind expects no less,
Smilingly knows and names the crisis, sits
Waiting till old things go and new arrive.
Therefore, I hold a husband but inept
Who turns impatient at such transit-time,
As if this running from the rod would last!

Since, even while I speak, the end is reached:
Success awaits the soon-disheartened man.
The parents turn their backs and leave the house,
The wife may wail but none shall intervene:
He hath attained his object, groom and bride
Partake the nuptial bower no soul can see,
Old things are passed and all again is new,
Over and gone the obstacles to peace,
Novorum—tenderly the Mantuan turns
The expression, some such purpose in his eye—
Nascitur ordo! Every storm is laid,
And forth from plain each pleasant herb may peep,

Each bloom of wifehood in abeyance late :
(Confer a passage in the Canticles.)

But what if, as 't is wont with plant and wife,
Flowers,—after a suppression to good end,
Still, when they do spring forth,—sprout here, spread there,
Anywhere likelier than beneath the foot
O' the lawful good-man gardener of the ground ?
He dug and dibbled, sowed and watered,—still
'T is a chance wayfarer shall pluck the increase.
Just so, respecting persons not too much,
The lady, foes allege, put forth each charm
And proper floweret of feminity
To whosoever had a nose to smell
Or breast to deck : what if the charge be true ?
The fault were graver had she looked with choice,
Fastidiously appointed who should grasp,
Who, in the whole town, go without the prize !
To nobody she destined donative,
But, first come was first served, the accuser saith.
Put case her sort of . . in this kind . . escapes

Were many and oft and indiscriminate—
Impute ye as the action were prepense,
The gift particular, arguing malice so?
Which butterfly of the wide air shall brag
" I was preferred to Guido "—when 't is clear
The cup, he quaffs at, lay with olent breast
Open to gnat, midge, bee and moth as well?
One chalice entertained the company;
And if its peevish lord object the more,
Mistake, misname such bounty in a wife,
Haste we to advertise him—charm of cheek,
Lustre of eye, allowance of the lip,
All womanly components in a spouse,
These are no household-bread each stranger's bite
Leaves by so much diminished for the mouth
O' the master of the house at supper-time:
But rather like a lump of spice they lie,
Morsel of myrrh, which scents the neighbourhood
Yet greets its lord no lighter by a grain.

Nay, even so, he shall be satisfied!
Concede we there was reason in his wrong,

Grant we his grievance and content the man!
For lo, Pompilia, she submits herself;
Ere three revolving years have crowned their course,
Off and away she puts this same reproach
Of lavish bounty, inconsiderate gift
O' the sweets of wifehood stored to other ends:
No longer shall he blame "She none excludes,"
But substitute "She laudably sees all,
"Searches the best out and selects the same."
For who is here, long sought and latest found,
Waiting his turn unmoved amid the whirl,
"*Constans in levitate*,"—Ha, my lords?
Calm in his levity,—indulge the quip!—
Since 't is a levite bears the bell away,
Parades him henceforth as Pompilia's choice.
'T is no ignoble object, husband! Doubt'st?
When here comes tripping Flaccus with his phrase
"Trust me, no miscreant singled from the mob,
"*Crede non illum tibi de scelesta*
"*Plebe delectum*," but a man of mark,
A priest, dost hear? Why then, submit thyself!
Priest, ay and very phœnix of such fowl,

Well-born, of culture, young and vigorous,
Comely too, since precise the precept points—
On the selected levite be there found
Nor mole nor scar nor blemish, lest the mind
Come all uncandid through the thwarting flesh!
Was not the son of Jesse ruddy, sleek,
Pleasant to look on, pleasant every way?
Since well he smote the harp and sweetly sang,
And danced till Abigail came out to see,
And seeing smiled and smiling ministered
The raisin-cluster and the cake of figs,
With ready meal refreshed the gifted youth,
Till Nabal, who was absent shearing sheep,
Felt heart sink, took to bed (discreetly done—
They might have been beforehand with him else)
And died—would Guido have behaved as well!
But ah, the faith of early days is gone,
Heu prisca fides! Nothing died in him
Save courtesy, good sense and proper trust,
Which, when they ebb from souls they should o'erflow,
Discover stub, weed, sludge and ugliness.
(The Pope, you know, is Neapolitan

And relishes a sea-side simile.)
Deserted by each charitable wave,
Guido, left high and dry, shows jealous now!
Jealous avouched, paraded: tax the fool
With any peccadillo, he responds
" Truly I beat my wife through jealousy,
" Imprisoned her and punished otherwise,
" Being jealous: now would threaten, sword in hand,
" Now manage to mix poison in her sight,
" And so forth: jealously I dealt, in fine."
Concede thus much, and what remains to prove?
Have I to teach my masters what effect
Hath jealousy, and how, befooling men,
It makes false true, abuses eye and ear,
Turns mere mist adamantine, loads with sound
Silence, and into void and vacancy
Crowds a whole phalanx of conspiring foes?
Therefore who owns " I watched with jealousy
" My wife," adds " for no reason in the world!"
What need that who says " Madman " should remark
" The thing I thought a serpent proved an eel?"—
Perchance the right Comacchian, six foot length,

And not an inch too long for that same pie
(Master Arcangeli has heard of such)
Whose succulence makes fasting bearable;
Meant to regale some moody splenetic
Who, pleasing to mistake the donor's gift,
Spying I know not what Lernæan snake
I' the luscious Lenten creature, stamps forsooth
The dainty in the dust.

Enough! Prepare,
Such lunes announced, for downright lunacy!
Insanit homo, threat succeeds to threat,
And blow redoubles blow,—his wife, the block.
But, if a block, shall not she jar the hand
That buffets her? The injurious idle stone
Rebounds and hits the head of him who flung.
Causeless rage breeds, i' the wife now, rageful cause,
Tyranny wakes rebellion from its sleep.
Rebellion, say I?—rather, self-defence,
Laudable wish to live and see good days,
Pricks our Pompilia now to fly the fool
By any means, at any price,—nay, more,

Nay, most of all, i' the very interest
O' the fool that, baffled of his blind desire
At any price, were truliest victor so.
Shall he effect his crime and lose his soul?
No, dictates duty to a loving wife!
Far better that the unconsummate blow,
Adroitly baulked by her, should back again,
Correctively admonish his own pate!

Crime then,—the Court is with me?—she must crush;
How crush it? By all efficacious means;
And these,—why, what in woman should they be?
"With horns the bull, with teeth the lion fights,
"To woman," quoth the lyrist quoted late,
"Nor teeth, nor horns, but beauty, Nature gave!"
Pretty i' the Pagan! Who dares blame the use
Of the armoury thus allowed for natural,—
Exclaim against a seeming-dubious play
O' the sole permitted weapon, spear and shield
Alike, resorted to i' the circumstance
By poor Pompilia? Grant she somewhat plied
Arts that allure, the magic nod and wink,

The witchery of gesture, spell of word,
Whereby the likelier to enlist this friend,
Yet stranger, as a champion on her side?
Such man, being but mere man, ('t was all she knew),
Must be made sure by beauty's silken bond,
The weakness that subdues the strong, and bows
Wisdom alike and folly. Grant the tale
O' the husband, which is false, were proved and true
To the letter—or the letters, I should say,
Abominations he professed to find
And fix upon Pompilia and the priest,—
Allow them hers—for though she could not write,
In early days of Eve-like innocence
That plucked no apple from the knowledge-tree,
Yet, at the Serpent's word, Eve plucks and eats
And knows—especially how to read and write:
And so Pompilia,—as the move o' the maw,
Quoth Persius, makes a parrot bid "Good day!"
A crow salute the concave, and a pie
Endeavour at proficiency in speech,—
So she, through hunger after fellowship,
May well have learned, though late, to play the scribe:

As indeed, there 's one letter on the list
Explicitly declares did happen here.
"You thought my letters could be none of mine,"
She tells her parents—"mine, who wanted skill;
"But now I have the skill, and write, you see!"
She needed write love-letters, so she learned,
"*Negatas artifex sequi voces*"—though
This letter nowise 'scapes the common lot,
But lies i' the condemnation of the rest,
Found by the husband's self who forged them all.
Yet, for the sacredness of argument,
For this once an exemption shall it plead—
Anything, anything to let the wheels
Of argument run glibly to their goal!
Concede she wrote (which were preposterous)
This and the other epistle,—what of it?
Where does the figment touch her candid fame?
Being in peril of her life—"my life,
"Not an hour's purchase," as the letter runs,—
And having but one stay in this extreme,
Out of the wide world but a single friend—
What could she other than resort to him,

And how with any hope resort but thus?
Shall modesty dare bid a stranger brave
Danger, disgrace, nay death in her behalf—
Think to entice the sternness of the steel
Yet spare love, loadstone moving manly mind?
—Most of all, when such mind is hampered so
By growth of circumstance athwart the life
O' the natural man, that decency forbids
He stoop and take the common privilege,
Say frank "I love," as all the vulgar do.
A man is wedded to philosophy,
Married to statesmanship; a man is old;
A man is fettered by the foolishness
He took for wisdom and talked ten years since;
A man is, like our friend the Canon here,
A priest, and wicked if he break his vow:
Shall he dare love, who may be Pope one day?
Despite the coil of such encumbrance here,
Suppose this man could love, unhappily,
And would love, dared he only let love show!
In case the woman of his love, speaks first,
From what embarrassment she sets him free!

"'T is I who break reserve, begin appeal,
"Confess that, whether you love me or no,
"I love you!" What an ease to dignity,
What help of pride from the hard high-backed chair
Down to the carpet where the kittens bask,
All under the pretence of gratitude!

From all which, I deduce—the lady here
Was bound to proffer nothing short of love
To the priest whose service was to save her. What?
Shall she propose him lucre, dust o' the mine,
Rubbish o' the rock, some diamond, muckworms prize,
Some pearl secreted by a sickly fish?
Scarcely! She caters for a generous taste.
'T is love shall beckon, beauty bid to breast,
Till all the Samson sink into the snare!
Because, permit the end—permit therewith
Means to the end!
How say you, good my lords?
I hope you heard my adversary ring
The changes on this precept: now, let me
Reverse the peal! *Quia dato licito fine,*

Ad illum assequendum ordinata
Non sunt damnanda media,—licit end
Enough in the escape from death, I hope,
To legalize the means illicit else
Of feigned love, false allurement, fancied fact.
Thus Venus losing Cupid on a day,
(See that *Idyllium Moschi*) seeking help,
In the anxiety of motherhood,
Allowably promised "Who shall bring report
"Where he is wandered to, my winged babe,
"I give him for reward a nectared kiss;
"But who brings safely back the truant's self,
"His be a super-sweet makes kiss seem cold!"
Are not these things writ for example-sake?

To such permitted motive, then, refer
All those professions, else were hard explain,
Of hope, fear, jealousy, and the rest of love!
He is Myrtillus, Amaryllis she,
She burns, he freezes,—all a mere device
To catch and keep the man, may save her life,
Whom otherwise nor catches she nor keeps!

Worst, once, turns best now: in all faith, she feigns:
Feigning,—the liker innocence to guilt,
The truer to the life is what she feigns!
How if Ulysses,—when, for public good
He sunk particular qualms and played the spy,
Entered Troy's hostile gate in beggar's garb—
How if he first had boggled at this clout,
Grown dainty o'er that clack-dish? Grime is grace
To whoso gropes amid the dung for gold.

Hence, beyond promises, we praise each proof
That promise was not simply made to break;
Mere moonshine-structure meant to fade at dawn:
We praise, as consequent and requisite,
What, enemies allege, were more than words,
Deeds—meetings at the window, twilight-trysts,
Nocturnal entertainments in the dim
Old labyrinthine palace; lies, we know—
Inventions we, long since, turned inside out.
Must such external semblance of intrigue
Demonstrate that intrigue there lurks perdue?
Does every hazel-sheath disclose a nut?

He were a Molinist who dared maintain
That midnight meetings in a screened alcove
Must argue folly in a matron—since
So would he bring a slur on Judith's self,
Commended beyond women, that she lured
The lustful to destruction through his lust.
Pompilia took not Judith's liberty,
No faulchion find you in her hand to smite,
No damsel to convey in dish the head
Of Holophernes,—style the Canon so—
Or is it the Count? If I entangle me
With my similitudes,—if wax wings melt,
And earthward down I drop, not mine the fault:
Blame your beneficence, O Court, O sun,
Whereof the beamy smile affects my flight!
What matter, so Pompilia's fame revive
I' the warmth that proves the bane of Icarus?

Yea, we have shown it lawful, necessary
Pompilia leave her husband, seek the house
O' the parents: and because 'twixt home and home
Lies a long road with many a danger rife,

Lions by the way and serpents in the path,
To rob and ravish,—much behoves she keep
Each shadow of suspicion from fair fame,
For her own sake much, but for his sake more,
The ingrate husband: Evidence shall be,
Some witness to the world how white she walks
I' the mire she wanders through ere Rome she reach.
And who so proper witness as a priest?
Gainsay ye? Let me hear who dares gainsay!
I hope we still can punish heretics!
"Give me the man" I say with him of Gath,
"That we may fight together!" None, I think:
The priest is granted me.

Then, if a priest,
One juvenile and potent: else, mayhap,
That dragon, our Saint George would slay, slays him.
And should fair face accompany strong hand,
The more complete equipment: nothing mars
Work, else praiseworthy, like a bodily flaw
I' the worker: as 't is said Saint Paul himself
Deplored the check o' the puny presence, still

Cheating his fulmination of its flash,
Albeit the bolt therein went true to oak.
Therefore the agent, as prescribed, she takes,—
Both juvenile and potent, handsome too,—
In all obedience: "good," you grant again.
Do you? I would you were the husband, lords!
How prompt and facile might departure be!
How boldly would Pompilia and the priest
March out of door, spread flag at beat of drum,
But that inapprehensive Guido grants
Neither premiss nor yet conclusion here,
And, purblind, dreads a bear in every bush!
For his own quietude and comfort, then,
Means must be found for flight in masquerade
At hour when all things sleep.—"Save jealousy!"
Right, Judges! Therefore shall the lady's wit
Supply the boon thwart nature baulks him of,
And do him service with the potent drug
(Helen's nepenthe, as my lords opine)
Which respites blessedly each fretted nerve
O' the much-enduring man: accordingly,
There lies he, duly dosed and sound asleep,

Relieved of woes, or real or raved about.
While soft she leaves his side, he shall not wake;
Nor stop who steals away to join her friend,
Nor do him mischief should he catch that friend
Intent on more than friendly office,—nay,
Nor get himself raw head and bones laid bare
In payment of his apparition!

Thus
Would I defend the step,—were the thing true
Which is a fable,—see my former speech,—
That Guido slept (who never slept a wink)
Through treachery, an opiate from his wife,
Who not so much as knew what opiates mean.

Now she may start: or hist,—a stoppage still!
A journey is an enterprise of cost!
As in campaigns, we fight but others pay,
Suis expensis, nemo militat.
'T is Guido's self we guard from accident,
Ensuring safety to Pompilia, versed
Nowise in misadventures by the way,

Hard riding and rough quarters, the rude fare,
The unready host. What magic mitigates
Each plague of travel to the unpractised wife?
Money, sweet Sirs! And were the fiction fact,
She helped herself thereto with liberal hand
From out her husband's store,—what fitter use
Was ever husband's money destined to?
With bag and baggage thus did Dido once
Decamp,—for more authority, a queen!

So is she fairly on her route at last,
Prepared for either fortune: nay and if
The priest, now all a-glow with enterprise,
Cool somewhat presently when fades the flush
O' the first adventure, clouded o'er belike
By doubts, misgivings how the day may die,
Though born with such auroral brilliance,—if
The brow seem over-pensive and the lip
'Gin lag and lose the prattle lightsome late,—
Vanquished by tedium of a prolonged jaunt
In a close carriage o'er a jolting road,
With only one young female substitute

For seventeen other Canons of ripe age
Were wont to keep him company in church,—
Shall not Pompilia haste to dissipate
The silent cloud that, gathering, bodes her bale?—
Prop the irresoluteness, may portend
Suspension of the project, check the flight,
Bring ruin on them both? Use every means,
Since means to the end are lawful! What i' the way
Of wile should have allowance like a kiss
Sagely and sisterly administered,
Sororia saltem oscula? We find
Such was the remedy her wit applied
To each incipient scruple of the priest,
If we believe,—as, while my wit is mine
I cannot,—what the driver testifies,
Borsi, called Venerino, the mere tool
Of Guido and his friend the Governor,—
Avowal I proved wrung from out the wretch,
After long rotting in imprisonment,
As price of liberty and favour: long
They tempted, he at last succumbed, and lo
Counted them out full tale each kiss and more,

" The journey being one long embrace," quoth he.
Still, though we should believe the driver's lie,
Nor even admit as probable excuse,
Right reading of the riddle,—as I urged
In my first argument, with fruit perhaps—
That what the owl-like eyes (at back of head !)
O' the driver, drowsed by driving night and day,
Supposed a vulgar interchange of lips,
This was but innocent jog of head 'gainst head,
Cheek meeting jowl as apple may touch pear
From branch and branch contiguous in the wind,
When Autumn blusters and the orchard rocks :—
That rapid run and the rough road were cause
O' the casual ambiguity, no harm
I' the world to eyes awake and penetrative :—
Say,—not to grasp a truth I can release
And safely fight without, yet conquer still,—
Say, she kissed him, say, he kissed her again !
Such osculation was a potent means,
A very efficacious help, no doubt :
Such with a third part of her nectar did
Venus imbue : why should Pompilia fling

The poet's declaration in his teeth?—
Pause to employ what,—since it had success,
And kept the priest her servant to the end,—
We must presume of energy enough,
No whit superfluous, so permissible?

The goal is gained: day, night and yet a day
Have run their round: a long and devious road
Is traversed,—many manners, various men
Passed in view, what cities did they see,
What hamlets mark, what profitable food
For after-meditation cull and store!
Till Rome, that Rome whereof—this voice
Would it might make our Molinists observe,
That she is built upon a rock nor shall
Their powers prevail against her!—Rome, I say,
Is all but reached; one stage more and they stop
Saved: pluck up heart, ye pair, and forward, then!

Ah, Nature—baffled she recurs, alas!
Nature imperiously exacts her due,
Spirit is willing but the flesh is weak:

Pompilia needs must acquiesce and swoon,
Give hopes alike and fears a breathing-while.
The innocent sleep soundly: sound she sleeps,
So let her slumber, then, unguarded save
By her own chastity, a triple mail,
And his good hand whose stalwart arms have borne
The sweet and senseless burthen like a babe
From coach to coach,—the serviceable strength!
Nay, what and if he gazed rewardedly
On the pale beauty prisoned in embrace,
Stooped over, stole a balmy breath perhaps
For more assurance sleep was not decease—
"*Ut vidi*," "how I saw!" succeeded by
"*Ut perii*," "how I sudden lost my brains!"
—What harm ensued to her unconscious quite?
For, curiosity—how natural!
Importunateness—what a privilege
In the ardent sex! And why curb ardour here?
How can the priest but pity whom he saved?
And pity is so near to love, and love
So neighbourly to all unreasonableness!
As to love's object, whether love were sage

Or foolish, could Pompilia know or care,
Being still sound asleep, as I premised?
Thus the philosopher absorbed by thought,
Even Archimedes, busy o'er a book
The while besiegers sacked his Syracuse,
Was ignorant of the imminence o' the point
O' the sword till it surprised him : let it stab,
And never knew himself was dead at all.
So sleep thou on, secure whate'er betide !
For thou, too, hast thy problem hard to solve—
How so much beauty is compatible
With so much innocence !

Fit place, methinks,
While in this task she rosily is lost,
To treat of and repel objection here
Which,—frivolous, I grant,—my mind misgives,
May somehow still have flitted, gadfly-like,
And teazed the Court at times—as if, all said
And done, there seemed, the Court might nearly say,
In a certain acceptation, somewhat more
Of what may pass for insincerity,

Falsehood, throughout the course Pompilia took,
Than befits Christian. Pagans held, we know,
Man always ought to aim at good and truth,
Not always put one thing in the same words:
Non idem semper dicere sed spectare
Debemus. But the Pagan yoke was light;
" Lie not at all," the exacter precept bids:
Each least lie breaks the law,—is sin, we hold.
I humble me, but venture to submit—
What prevents sin, itself is sinless, sure:
And sin, which hinders sin of deeper dye,
Softens itself away by contrast so.
Conceive me! Little sin, by none at all,
Were properly condemned for great: but great,
By greater, dwindles into small again.
Now, what is greatest sin of womanhood?
That which unwomans it, abolishes
The nature of the woman,—impudence.
Who contradicts me here? Concede me, then,
Whatever friendly fault may interpose
To save the sex from self-abolishment
Is three-parts on the way to virtue's rank!

And, what is taxed here as duplicity,
Feint, wile and trick,—admitted for the nonce,—
What worse do one and all than interpose,
Hold, as it were, a deprecating hand,
Statuesquely, in the Medicean mode,
Before some shame which modesty would veil?
Who blames the gesture prettily perverse?
Thus,—let ye miss a point illustrative,—
Admit the husband's calumny—allow
That the wife, having penned the epistle fraught
With horrors, charge on charge of crime she heaped
O' the head of Pietro and Violante—(still
Presumed her parents)—having dispatched the same
To their arch-enemy Paolo, through free choice
And no sort of compulsion in the world—
Put case she next discards simplicity
For craft, denies the voluntary act,
Declares herself a passive instrument
I' the husband's hands; that, duped by knavery,
She traced the characters she could not write,
And took on trust the unread sense which, read,
And recognized were to be spurned at once:

Allow this calumny, I reiterate !
Who is so dull as wonder at the pose
Of our Pompilia in the circumstance ?
Who sees not that the too-ingenuous soul,
Repugnant even at a duty done
Which brought beneath too scrutinizing glare
The misdemeanours,—buried in the dark,—
Of the authors of her being, as believed,—
Stung to the quick at her impulsive deed,
And willing to repair what harm it worked,
She—wise in this beyond what Nero proved,
Who, when folks urged the candid juvenile
To sign the warrant, doom the guilty dead,
" Would I had never learned to write," quoth he !
—Pompilia rose above the Roman, cried
" To read or write I never learned at all ! "
O splendidly mendacious !

But time fleets :
Let us not linger : hurry to the end,
Since flight does end and that, disastrously.
Beware ye blame desert for unsuccess,

Disparage each expedient else to praise,
Call failure folly! Man's best effort fails.
After ten years' resistance Troy succumbed:
Could valour save a town, Troy still had stood.
Pompilia came off halting in no point
Of courage, conduct, her long journey through:
But nature sank exhausted at the close,
And, as I said, she swooned and slept all night.
Morn breaks and brings the husband: we assist
At the spectacle. Discovery succeeds.
Ha, how is this? What moonstruck rage is here?
Though we confess to partial frailty now,
To error in a woman and a wife,
Is 't by the rough way she shall be reclaimed?
Who bursts upon her chambered privacy?
What crowd profanes the chaste *cubiculum?*
What outcries and lewd laughter, scurril gibe
And ribald jest to scare the ministrant
Good angels that commerce with souls in sleep?
Why, had the worst crowned Guido to his wish,
Confirmed his most irrational surmise,
Yet there be bounds to man's emotion, checks

To an immoderate astonishment.
'T is decent horror, regulated wrath,
Befit our dispensation: have we back
The old Pagan licence? Shall a Vulcan clap
His net o' the sudden and expose the pair
To the unquenchable universal mirth?
A feat, antiquity saw scandal in
So clearly, that the nauseous tale thereof—
Demodocus his nugatory song—
Hath ever been concluded modern stuff
Impossible to the mouth of the grave Muse,
So, foisted into that Eighth Odyssey
By some impertinent pickthank. O thou fool,
Count Guido Franceschini, what didst gain
By publishing thy secrets to the world?
Were all the precepts of the wise a waste—
Bred in thee not one touch of reverence?
Admit thy wife—admonish we the fool,—
Were falseness' self, why chronicle thy shame?
Much rather should thy teeth bite out thy tongue,
Dumb lip consort with desecrated brow,
Silence become historiographer,

And thou—thine own Cornelius Tacitus!
But virtue, barred, still leaps the barrier, lords!
—Still, moon-like, penetrates the encroaching mist
And bursts, all broad and bare, on night, ye know!
Surprised, then, in the garb of truth, perhaps,
Pompilia, thus opposed, breaks obstacle,
Springs to her feet, and stands Thalassian-pure,
Confronts the foe,—nay, catches at his sword
And tries to kill the intruder, he complains.
Why, so she gave her lord his lesson back,
Crowned him, this time, the virtuous woman's way,
With an exact obedience; he brought sword,
She drew the same, since swords are meant to draw.
Tell not me 't is sharp play with tools on edge!
It was the husband chose the weapon here.
Why did not he inaugurate the game
With some gentility of apophthegm
Still pregnant on the philosophic page,
Some captivating cadence still a-lisp
O' the poet's lyre? Such spells subdue the surge,
Make tame the tempest, much more mitigate
The passions of the mind, and probably

Had moved Pompilia to a smiling blush.
No, he must needs prefer the argument
O' the blow: and she obeyed, in duty bound,
Returned him buffet ratiocinative—
Ay, in the reasoner's own interest,
For wife must follow whither husband leads,
Vindicate honour as himself prescribes,
Save him the very way himself bids save!
No question but who jumps into a quag
Should stretch forth hand and pray one "Pull me out
"By the hand!" such were the customary cry:
But Guido pleased to bid "Leave hand alone!
"Join both feet, rather, jump upon my head:
"I extricate myself by the rebound!"
And dutifully as enjoined she jumped—
Drew his own sword and menaced his own life,
Anything to content a wilful spouse.

And so he was contented—one must do
Justice to the expedient which succeeds,
Strange as it seem: at flourish of the blade,
The crowd drew back, stood breathless and abashed,

Then murmured " This should be no wanton wife,
" No conscience-stricken sinner, caught i' the act,
" And patiently awaiting our first stone:
" But a poor hard-pressed all-bewildered thing,
" Has rushed so far, misguidely perhaps,
" Meaning no more harm than a frightened sheep.
" She sought for aid; and if she made mistake
" I' the man could aid most, why—so mortals do:
" Even the blessed Magdalen mistook
" Far less forgiveably: consult the place—
" Supposing him to be the gardener,
" ' Sir,' said she, and so following." Why more words?
Forthwith the wife is pronounced innocent:
What would the husband more than gain his cause,
And find that honour flash in the world's eye,
His apprehension was lest soil had smirched?

So, happily the adventure comes to close
Whereon my fat opponent grounds his charge
Preposterous: at mid-day he groans " How dark!"
Listen to me, thou Archangelic swine!
Where is the ambiguity to blame,

The flaw to find in our Pompilia? Safe
She stands, see! Does thy comment follow quick
" Safe, inasmuch as at the end proposed;
" But thither she picked way by devious path—
" Stands dirtied, no dubiety at all!
" I recognize success, yet, all the same,
" Importunately will suggestion prick—
" Better Pompilia gained the right to boast
" ' No devious path, no doubtful patch was mine,
" ' I saved my head nor sacrificed my foot!'
" Why, being in a peril, show mistrust
" Of the angels set to guard the innocent?
" Why rather hold by obvious vulgar help
" Of stratagem and subterfuge, excused
" Somewhat, but still no less a foil, a fault,
" Since low with high, and good with bad is linked?
" Methinks I view some ancient bas-relief.
" There stands Hesione thrust out by Troy,
" Her father's hand has chained her to a crag,
" Her mother's from the virgin plucked the vest,
" At a safe distance both distressful watch,
" While near and nearer comes the snorting orc.

" I look that, white and perfect to the end,
" She wait till Jove despatch some demigod ;
" Not that,—impatient of celestial club
" Alcmena's son should brandish at the beast,—
" She daub, disguise her dainty limbs with pitch,
" And so elude the purblind monster ! Ay,
" The trick succeeds, but 't is an ugly trick,
" Where needs have been no trick ! "

My answer? Faugh ;
Nimis incongrue ! Too absurdly put !
Sententiam ego teneo contrariam,
Trick, I maintain, had no alternative.
The heavens were bound with brass,—Jove far at feast
(No feast like that thou didst not ask me to,
Arcangeli,—I heard of thy regale !)
With the unblamed Æthiop,—Hercules spun wool
I' the lap of Omphale, while Virtue shrieked—
The brute came paddling all the faster. You
Of Troy, who stood at distance, where 's the aid
You offered in the extremity? Most and least,
Gentle and simple, here the Governor,

There the Archbishop, everywhere the friends,
Shook heads and waited for a miracle,
Or went their way, left Virtue to her fate.
Just this one rough and ready man leapt forth !
—Was found, sole anti-Fabius (dare I say)
Who restored things, with no delay at all,
Qui haud cunctando, rem restituit ! He,
He only, Caponsacchi 'mid a crowd,
Caught Virtue up, carried Pompilia off
Through gaping impotence of sympathy
In ranged Arezzo : what you take for pitch,
Is nothing worse, belike, than black and blue,
Mere evanescent proof that hardy hands
Did yeoman's service, cared not where the gripe
Was more than duly energetic : bruised,
She smarts a little, but her bones are saved
A fracture, and her skin will soon show sleek.
How it disgusts when weakness, false-refined,
Censures the honest rude effective strength,—
When sickly dreamers of the impossible
Decry plain sturdiness which does the feat
With eyes wide open !

Did occasion serve,
I could illustrate, if my lords allow:
Quid vetat, what forbids I aptly ask
With Horace, that I give my anger vent,
While I let breathe, no less, and recreate,
The gravity of my Judges, by a tale?
A case in point—what though an apologue
Graced by tradition?—possibly a fact:
Tradition must precede all scripture, words
Serve as our warrant ere our books can be:
So, to tradition back we needs must go
For any fact's authority: and this
Hath lived so far (like jewel hid in muck)
On page of that old lying vanity
Called "Sepher Toldoth Yeschu:" God be praised,
I read no Hebrew,—take the thing on trust:
But I believe the writer meant no good
(Blind as he was to truth in some respects)
To our pestiferous and schismatic . . well,
My lords' conjecture be the touchstone, show
The thing for what it is! The author lacks
Discretion, and his zeal exceeds: but zeal,—

How rare in our degenerate day! Enough!
Here is the story: fear not, I shall chop
And change a little, else my Jew would press
All too unmannerly before the Court.

It happened once,—begins this foolish Jew,
Pretending to write Christian history,—
That three, held greatest, best and worst of men,
Peter and John and Judas, spent a day
In toil and travel through the country-side
On some sufficient business—I suspect,
Suppression of some Molinism i' the bud.
Foot-sore and hungry, dropping with fatigue,
They reached by nightfall a poor lonely grange,
Hostel or inn: so, knocked and entered there.
"Your pleasure, great ones?"—"Shelter, rest and food!"
For shelter, there was one bare room above;
For rest therein, three beds of bundled straw:
For food, one wretched starveling fowl, no more—
Meat for one mouth, but mockery for three.
"You have my utmost." How should supper serve?
Peter broke silence: "To the spit with fowl!

" And while 't is cooking, sleep !—since beds there be,
" And, so far, satisfaction of a want.
" Sleep we an hour, awake at supper-time,
" Then each of us narrate the dream he had,
" And he whose dream shall prove the happiest, point
" The clearliest out the dreamer as ordained
" Beyond his fellows to receive the fowl,
" Him let our shares be cheerful tribute to,
" His the entire meal, may it do him good !"
Who could dispute so plain a consequence ?
So said, so done : each hurried to his straw,
Slept his hour's-sleep and dreamed his dream, and woke.
" I," commenced John, " dreamed that I gained the prize
" We all aspire to : the proud place was mine,
" Throughout the earth and to the end of time
" I was the Loved Disciple : mine the meal !"
" But I," proceeded Peter, " dreamed, a word
" Gave me the headship of our company,
" Made me the Vicar and Vice-regent, gave
" The keys of heaven and hell into my hand,
" And o'er the earth, dominion : mine the meal !"

" While I," submitted in soft under-tone
The Iscariot—sense of his unworthiness
Turning each eye up to the inmost white—
With long-drawn sigh, yet letting both lips smack,
" I have had just the pitifullest dream
" That ever proved man meanest of his mates,
" And born foot-washer and foot-wiper, nay
" Foot-kisser to each comrade of you all!
" I dreamed I dreamed; and in that mimic dream
" (Impalpable to dream as dream to fact)
" Methought I meanly chose to sleep no wink
" But wait until I heard my brethren breathe;
" Then stole from couch, slipped noiseless to the door,
" Slid downstairs, furtively approached the hearth,
" Found the fowl duly brown, both back and breast,
" Hissing in harmony with the cricket's chirp,
" Grilled to a point; said no grace but fell to,
" Nor finished till the skeleton lay bare.
" In penitence for which ignoble dream,
" Lo, I renounce my portion cheerfully!
" Fie on the flesh—be mine the etherial gust,
" And yours the sublunary sustenance!

" See that whate'er be left ye give the poor ! "
Down the two scuttled, one on other's heel,
Stung by a fell surmise ; and found, alack,
A goodly savour, both the drumstick bones,
And that which henceforth took the appropriate name
O' the Merry-thought, in memory of the fact
That to keep wide awake is our best dream.

So,—as was said once of Thucydides
And his sole joke, " The lion, lo, hath laughed ! "—
Just so, the Governor and all that 's great
I' the city, never meant that Innocence
Should quite starve while Authority sat at meat ;
They meant to fling a bone at banquet's end :
Wished well to our Pompilia—in their dreams,
Nor bore the secular sword in vain—asleep.
Just so the Archbishop and all good like him
Went to bed meaning to pour oil and wine
I' the wounds of her, next day,—but long ere day,
They had burned the one and drunk the other, while
Just so, again, contrariwise, the priest
Sustained poor Nature in extremity

By stuffing barley-bread into her mouth,
Saving Pompilia (grant the parallel)
By the plain homely and straightforward way
Taught him by common sense. Let others shriek
" Oh what refined expedients did we dream
" Proved us the only fit to help the fair ! "
He cried " A carriage waits, jump in with me ! "

And now, this application pardoned, lords,—
This recreative pause and breathing-while,—
Back to beseemingness and gravity !
For Law steps in : Guido appeals to Law,
Demands she arbitrate,—does well for once.
O Law, of thee how neatly was it said
By that old Sophocles, thou hast thy seat
I' the very breast of Jove, no meanlier throned !
Here is a piece of work now, hitherto
Begun and carried on, concluded near,
Without an eye-glance cast thy sceptre's way ;
And, lo the stumbling and discomfiture !
Well may you call them " lawless " means, men take
To extricate themselves through mother-wit

When tangled haply in the toils of life!
Guido would try conclusions with his foe,
Whoe'er the foe was and whate'er the offence;
He would recover certain dowry-dues:
Instead of asking Law to lend a hand,
What pother of sword drawn and pistol cocked,
What peddling with forged letters and paid spies,
Politic circumvention!—all to end
As it began—by loss of the fool's head,
First in a figure, presently in a fact.
It is a lesson to mankind at large.
How other were the end, would men be sage
And bear confidingly each quarrel straight,
O Law, to thy recipient mother-knees!
How would the children light come and prompt go,
This, with a red-cheeked apple for reward,
The other, peradventure red-cheeked too
I' the rear, by taste of birch for punishment.
No foolish brawling murder any more!
Peace for the household, practice for the Fisc,
And plenty for the exchequer of my lords!
Too much to hope, in this world: in the next,

Who knows? Since, why should sit the Twelve enthroned
To judge the tribes, unless the tribes be judged?
And 't is impossible but offences come:
So, all 's one lawsuit, all one long leet-day!

Forgive me this digression—that I stand
Entranced awhile at Law's first beam, outbreak
O' the business, when the Count's good angel bade
" Put up thy sword, born enemy to the ear,
" And let Law listen to thy difference!"
And Law does listen and compose the strife,
Settle the suit, how wisely and how well!
On our Pompilia, faultless to a fault,
Law bends a brow maternally severe,
Implies the worth of perfect chastity,
By fancying the flaw she cannot find.
Superfluous sifting snow, nor helps nor harms:
'T is safe to censure levity in youth,
Tax womanhood with indiscretion, sure!
Since toys, permissible to-day, become
Follies to-morrow: prattle shocks in church:
And that curt skirt which lets a maiden skip,

The matron changes for a trailing robe.
Mothers may aim a blow with half-shut eyes
Nodding above their spindles by the fire,
And chance to hit some hidden fault, else safe.
Just so, Law hazarded a punishment—
If applicable to the circumstance,
Why, well! if not so apposite, well too.
" Quit the gay range o' the world," I hear her cry,
" Enter, in lieu, the penitential pound:
" Exchange the gauds of pomp for ashes, dust!
" Leave each mollitious haunt of luxury!
" The golden-garnished silken-couched alcove,
" The many-columned terrace that so tempts
" Feminine soul put foot forth, extend ear
" To fluttering joy of lover's serenade,—
" Leave these for cellular seclusion! mask
" And dance no more, but fast and pray! avaunt—
" Be burned, thy wicked townsman's sonnet-book!
" Welcome, mild hymnal by . . . some better scribe!
" For the warm arms, were wont enfold thy flesh,
" Let wire-shirt plough and whip-cord discipline!"
If such an exhortation proved, perchance,

Inapplicable, words bestowed in waste,
What harm, since law has store, can spend nor miss?

And so, our paragon submits herself,
Goes at command into the holy house,
And, also at command, comes out again:
For, could the effect of such obedience prove
Too certain, too immediate? Being healed,
Go blaze abroad the matter, blessed one!
Art thou sound forthwith? Speedily vacate
The step by pool-side, leave Bethesda free
To patients plentifully posted round,
Since the whole need not the physician! Brief,
She may betake her to her parents' place.
Welcome her, father, with wide arms once more,
Motion her, mother, to thy breast again!
For why? Since Law relinquishes the charge,
Grants to your dwelling-place a prison's style,
Rejoice you with Pompilia! golden days,
Redeunt Saturnia regna. Six weeks slip,
And she is domiciled in house and home
As though she thence had never budged at all.

And thither let the husband,—joyous, ay,
But contrite also—quick betake himself,
Proud that his dove which lay among the pots
Hath mued those dingy feathers,—moulted now,
Shows silver bosom clothed with yellow gold!
So shall he tempt her to the perch she fled,
Bid to domestic bliss the truant back.

But let him not delay! Time fleets how fast,
And opportunity, the irrevocable,
Once flown will flout him! Is the furrow traced?
If field with corn ye fail preoccupy,
Darnel for wheat and thistle-beards for grain,
Infelix lolium, carduus horridus,
Will grow apace in combination prompt,
Defraud the husbandman of his desire.
Already—hist—what murmurs 'monish now
The laggard?—doubtful, nay, fantastic bruit
Of such an apparation, such return
Interdum, to anticipate the spouse,
Of Caponsacchi's very self! 'T is said,
When nights are lone and company is rare,

His visitations brighten winter up.
If so they did—which nowise I believe—
(How can I ?—proof abounding that the priest,
Once fairly at his relegation-place
Never once left it) still, admit he stole
A midnight march, would fain see friend again,
Find matter for instruction in the past,
Renew the old adventure in such chat
As cheers a fireside ! He was lonely too,
He, too, must need his recreative hour.
Shall it amaze the philosophic mind
If one, was wont the empurpled cup to quaff,
Have feminine society at will,
Being debarred abruptly from all drink
Save at the spring which Adam used for wine,
Dreads harm to just the health he hoped to guard,
And, meaning abstinence, gains malady ?
Ask Tozzi, now physician to the Pope !
" Little by little break "—(I hear he bids
Master Arcangeli my antagonist,
Who loves good cheer, and may indulge too much :
So I explain the logic of the plea

Wherewith he opened our proceedings late)—
" Little by little break a habit, Don,
" Become necessity to feeble flesh ! "
And thus, nocturnal taste of intercourse
(Which never happened,—but, suppose it did)
May have been used to dishabituate
By sip and sip this drainer to the dregs
O' the draught of conversation,—heady stuff,
Brewage which, broached, it took two days and nights
To properly discuss i' the journey, Sirs !
Such power has second-nature, men call use,
That undelightful objects get to charm
Instead of chafe : the daily colocynth
Tickles the palate by repeated dose,
Old sores scratch kindly, the ass makes a push
Although the mill-yoke-wound be smarting yet,
For mill-door bolted on a holiday :
Nor must we marvel here if impulse urge
To talk the old story over now and then,
The hopes and fears, the stoppage and the haste,—
Subjects of colloquy to surfeit once.

" Here did you bid me twine a rosy wreath !"
" And there you paid my lips a compliment !"
" Here you admired the tower could be so tall !"
" And there you likened that of Lebanon
" To the nose of the beloved !" Trifles ! still,
" *Forsan et hæc olim*,"—such trifles serve
To make the minutes pass in winter-time.

Husband, return then, I re-counsel thee !
For, finally, of all glad circumstance
Should make a prompt return imperative,
What in the world awaits thee, dost suppose ?
O' the sudden, as good gifts are wont befall,
What is the hap of our unconscious Count ?
That which lights bonfire and sets cask a-tilt,
Dissolves the stubborn'st heart in jollity.
O admirable, there is born a babe,
A son, an heir, a Franceschini last
And best o' the stock ! Pompilia, thine the palm !
Repaying incredulity with faith,
Ungenerous thrift of each marital debt
With bounty in profuse expenditure,

Pompilia scorns to have the old year end
Without a present shall ring in the new—
Bestows on her too-parsimonious lord
An infant for the apple of his eye,
Core of his heart, and crown completing life,
True *summun bonum* of the earthly lot!
" We," saith ingeniously the sage, " are born
" Solely that others may be born of us."
So, father, take thy child, for thine that child,
Oh nothing doubt! In wedlock born, law holds
Baseness impossible: since "*filius est*
Quem nuptiæ demonstrant," twits the text
Whoever dares to doubt.

Yet doubt he dares!
O faith where art thou flown from out the world?
Already on what an age of doubt we fall!
Instead of each disputing for the prize,
The babe is bandied here from that to this.
Whose the babe? " *Cujum pecus?* " Guido's lamb?
" *An Melibœi?* " Nay, but of the priest!
" *Non sed Ægonis!* " Someone must be sire:

And who shall say, in such a puzzling strait,
If there were not vouchsafed some miracle
To the wife who had been harassed and abused
More than enough by Guido's family
For non-production of the promised fruit
Of marriage? What if Nature, I demand,
Touched to the quick by taunts upon her sloth,
Had roused herself, put forth recondite power,
Bestowed this birth to vindicate her sway,
Like the strange favour, Maro memorized
As granted Aristæus when his hive
Lay empty of the swarm? not one more bee—
Not one more babe to Franceschini's house!
And lo, a new birth filled the air with joy,
Sprung from the bowels of the generous steer,
A novel son and heir rejoiced the Count!
Spontaneous generation, need I prove
Were facile feat to Nature at a pinch?
Let whoso doubts, steep horsehair certain weeks,
In water, there will be produced a snake;
Spontaneous product of the horse, which horse
Happens to be the representative—

Now that I think on 't—of Arezzo's self,
The very city our conception blessed:
Is not a prancing horse the City-arms?
What sane eye fails to see coincidence?
Cur ego, boast thou, my Pompilia, then,
Desperem fieri sine conjuge
Mater—how well the Ovidian distich suits!—
Et parere intacto dummodo
Casta viro? a miracle was wrought!
Note, further, as to mark the prodigy,
The babe in question neither took the name
Of Guido, from the sire presumptive, nor
Giuseppe, from the sire potential, but
Gaetano—last saint of our hierarchy,
And newest namer for a thing so new!
What other motive could have prompted choice?

Therefore be peace again: exult, ye hills!
Ye vales rejoicingly break forth in song!
Incipe, parve puer, begin, small boy,
Risu cognoscere patrem, with a laugh
To recognize thy parent! Nor do thou

Boggle, oh parent, to return the grace!
Nec anceps hære, pater, puero
Cognoscendo—one may well eke out the prayer!
In vain! The perverse Guido doubts his eyes,
Distrusts assurance, lets the devil drive.
Because his house is swept and garnished now,
He, having summoned seven like himself,
Must hurry thither, knock and enter in,
And make the last worse than the first, indeed!
Is he content? We are. No further blame
O' the man and murder! They were stigmatized
Befittingly: the Court heard long ago
My mind o' the matter, which, outpouring full,
Has long since swept like surge, i' the simile
Of Homer, overborne both dyke and dam,
And whelmed alike client and advocate:
His fate is sealed, his life as good as gone,
On him I am not tempted to waste word.
Yet though my purpose holds,—which was and is
And solely shall be to the very end,
To draw the true *effigies* of a saint,
Do justice to perfection in the sex,—

Yet let not some gross pamperer of the flesh
And niggard in the spirit's nourishment,
Whose feeding hath offuscated his wit
Rather than law,—he never had, to lose—
Let not such advocate object to me
I leave my proper function of attack!
"What's this to Bacchus?"—(in the classic phrase,
Well used, for once) he hiccups probably.
O Advocate o' the Poor, thou born to make
Their blessing void—*beati pauperes!*
By painting saintship I depicture sin:
Beside my pearl, I prove how black thy jet,
And, through Pompilia's virtue, Guido's crime.

Back to her, then,—with but one beauty more,
End we our argument,—one crowning grace
Pre-eminent 'mid agony and death.
For to the last Pompilia played her part,
Used the right means to the permissible end,
And, wily as an eel that stirs the mud
Thick overhead, so baffling spearman's thrust,
She, while he stabbed her, simulated death,

Delayed, for his sake, the catastrophe,
Obtained herself a respite, four days' grace,
Whereby she told her story to the world,
Enabled me to make the present speech,
And, by a full confession, saved her soul.

Yet hold, even here would malice leer its last,
Gurgle its choaked remonstrance: snake, hiss free!
Oh, that 's the objection? And to whom?—not her
But me, forsooth—as, in the very act
Of both confession and (what followed close)
Subsequent talk, chatter and gossipry,
Babble to sympathizing he and she
Whoever chose besiege her dying bed,—
As this were found at variance with my tale,
Falsified all I have adduced for truth,
Admitted not one peccadillo here,
Pretended to perfection, first and last,
O' the whole procedure—perfect in the end,
Perfect i' the means, perfect in everything,
Leaving a lawyer nothing to excuse,
Reason away and show his skill about!

—A flight, impossible to Adamic flesh,
Just to be fancied, scarcely to be wished,
And, anyhow, unpleadable in court!
"How reconcile" gasps Malice "that with this?"

Your "this," friend, is extraneous to the law,
Comes of men's outside meddling, the unskilled
Interposition of such fools as press
Out of their province. Must I speak my mind?
Far better had Pompilia died o' the spot
Than found a tongue to wag and shame the law,
Shame most of all herself,—could friendship fail,
And advocacy lie less on the alert:
But no, they shall protect her to the end!
Do I credit the alleged narration? No!
Lied our Pompilia then, to laud herself?
Still, no! Clear up what seems discrepancy?
The means abound: art 's long, though time is short;
So, keeping me in compass, all I urge
Is—since, confession at the point of death,
Nam in articulo mortis, with the Church
Passes for statement honest and sincere,

Nemo presumitur reus esse,—then,
If sure that all affirmed would be believed,
'T was charity, in her so circumstanced,
To spend the last breath in one effort more
For universal good of friend and foe:
And,—by pretending utter innocence,
Nay, freedom from each foible we forgive,—
Re-integrate—not solely her own fame,
But do the like kind office for the priest
Whom telling the crude truth about might vex,
Haply expose to peril, abbreviate
Indeed the long career of usefulness
Presumably before him: while her lord,
Whose fleeting life is forfeit to the law,—
What mercy to the culprit if, by just
The gift of such a full certificate
Of his immitigable guiltiness,
She stifled in him the absurd conceit
Of murder as it were a mere revenge
—Stopped confirmation of that jealousy
Which, did she but acknowledge the first flaw,
The faintest foible, had emboldened him

To battle with the charge, baulk penitence,
Bar preparation for impending fate!
Whereas, persuade him that he slew a saint
Who sinned not even where she may have sinned,
You urge him all the brisklier to repent
Of most and least and aught and everything!
Still, if this view of mine content you not,
Lords, nor excuse the genial falsehood here,
We come to our *Triarii*, last resource:
We fall back on the inexpugnable,
Submitting,—she confessed before she talked!
The sacrament obliterates the sin:
What is not,—was not, therefore, in a sense.
Let Molinists distinguish, "Souls washed white
"But red once, still show pinkish to the eye!"
We say, abolishment is nothingness,
And nothingness has neither head nor tail,
End nor beginning! Better estimate
Exorbitantly, than disparage aught
Of the efficacity of the act, I hope!

Solvuntur tabulæ? May we laugh and go?

Well,—not before (in filial gratitude
To Law, who, mighty mother, waves adieu)
We take on us to vindicate Law's self!
For,—yea, Sirs,—curb the start, curtail the stare!—
Remains that we apologize for haste
I' the Law, our lady who here bristles up
" Blame my procedure? Could the Court mistake?
" (Which were indeed a misery to think)
" Did not my sentence in the former stage
" O' the business bear a title plain enough?
" *Decretum*"—I translate it word for word—
" ' Decreed: the priest, for his complicity
" ' I' the flight and deviation of the dame,
" ' As well as for unlawful intercourse,
" ' Is banished three years:' crime and penalty,
" Declared alike. If he be taxed with guilt,
" How can you call Pompilia innocent?
" If both be innocent, have I been just?"

Gently, O mother, judge men—whose mistake
Is in the mere misapprehensiveness!
The *Titulus* a-top of your decree

Was but to ticket there the kind of charge
You in good time would arbitrate upon.
Title is one thing,—arbitration's self,
Probatio, quite another possibly.
Subsistit, there holds good the old response,
Responsio tradita, we must not stick,
Quod non sit attendendus Titulus,
To the Title, *sed Probatio*, but the Proof,
Resultans ex processu, the result
O' the Trial, and the style of punishment,
Et pœna per sententiam imposita.
All is tentative, till the sentence come :
An indication of what men expect,
But nowise an assurance they shall find.
Lords, what if we permissibly relax
The tense bow, as the law-god Phœbus bids,
Relieve our gravity at labour's close ?
I traverse Rome, feel thirsty, need a draught,
Look for a wine-shop, find it by the bough
Projecting as to say " Here wine is sold ! "
So much I know,—" sold :" but what sort of wine ?
Strong, weak, sweet, sour, home-made or foreign drink ?

That much must I discover by myself.
"Wine is sold," quoth the bough, "but good or bad,
"Find, and inform us when you smack your lips!"
Exactly so, Law hangs her title forth,
To show she entertains you with such case
About such crime. Come in! she pours, you quaff.
You find the Priest good liquor in the main,
But heady and provocative of brawls:
Remand the residue to flask once more,
Lay it low where it may deposit lees,
I' the cellar: thence produce it presently,
Three years the brighter and the better!

Thus,
Law's son, have I bestowed my filial help,
And thus I end, *tenax proposito;*
Point to point as I purposed have I drawn
Pompilia, and implied as terribly
Guido: so, gazing, let the world crown Law—
Able once more, despite my impotence,
And helped by the acumen of the Court,

To eliminate, display, make triumph truth!
What other prize than truth were worth the pains?

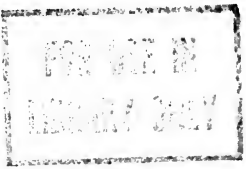
There's my oration—much exceeds in length
That famed panegyric of Isocrates,
They say it took him fifteen years to pen.
But all those ancients could say anything!
He put in just what rushed into his head:
While I shall have to prune and pare and print.
This comes of being born in modern times
With priests for auditory. Still, it pays.

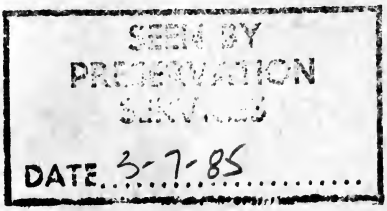
THE END OF VOL. III.

LONDON :
PRINTED BY SMITH, ELDER AND CO.,
OLD BAILEY, E.C.

PR
4219
A1
1872
v.3

Browning, Robert
The ring and the book
2d ed.



PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY